



THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76

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THE LIBERTY BOYS' "WILD IRISHMAN": OR, A LIVELY LAD FROM DUBLIN.

By HARRY MOORE.



Club in hand, the "Wild Irishman" danced a lively jig, giving vent to an occasional lusty yell, while the "Liberty Boys" laughed heartily and applauded without stint.

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CHAPTER I.

THE "WILD IRISHMAN."

"Shure, capthin, an' phy don't yez l'ave the young leddy be?"

It was a pleasant evening in the last week in August of the year 1780.

In front of a farmhouse in central South Carolina, not more than six miles from Camden, stood a party of British soldiers.

There were ten in the party, and that it was on a foraging expedition was evident, for piled around on the ground were a number of articles in the way of clothing and furniture, and some bags which evidently contained provisions.

Besides the soldiers there was a pretty girl of perhaps seventeen years. Her name was Mary Martin, and her father was a patriot. He was away to-day, he and his wife having gone to Camden to sell some produce and buy some things needed in the house.

This had left Mary alone at home, but as she was a brave girl she was not at all afraid. She had not thought of such a thing as that the redcoats, who were at Camden, might come and bother her.

But they had come just the same. About half-past four o'clock the ten soldiers had put in an appearance, entered the house unceremoniously, and had taken whatever they saw that won their liking.

The girl protested, but her protestations had elicited only laughter from the soldiers of King George.

They had gone right ahead with their work, until they secured all they cared for, and then their leader, who wore a captain's uniform, turned his attention to the girl, and asked her for a kiss.

The girl had told him no, in decided tones, but the captain happened to be one of those who thought himself irresistible to the fair sex, and he imagined Mary was simply putting on when she said he should not have a kiss.

He had become more importunate than ever, and had at last declared his intention of taking not one, but several kisses, to pay him for the trouble of waiting and talking.

Among the soldiers was a tall, broad-shouldered, freckle-faced Irishman named Larry Holt. He was a noble-hearted fellow, and his blue eyes had flashed, and a frown had come over his face when his captain kept on persisting, and now, when the officer said he was going to take the

kisses, whether or no, and started toward the girl, the young Irishman exclaimed:

"Shure, capthin, an' phy don't yez l'ave the young leddy be?"

The captain paused instantly, and whirled, his face red with anger.

He glared at the frank-faced young Irishman in a fierce manner for a few moments, but finding the private soldier met his glare unflinchingly, he grew even more angry, and cried out:

"What do you mean by speaking thus to an officer, Larry Holt?"

"Shure, an' Oi mane phwat Oi said, sur," was the reply, in the broad brogue of the North of Ireland.

"You are impertinent, sir!"

"Am Oi?"

"Yes; you have no right to address saucy remarks to an officer."

"Shure, an' nayther do yez have inny roight to address mane remarks to the young leddy."

There was no getting ahead of Larry Holt, who among his comrades in the regiment was known as "The Wild Irishman." He was only about twenty years old, but was a magnificent specimen of manhood, and it seemed very hard to get him to understand that a private soldier was merely a machine, and had no rights which anyone was bound to respect. He would speak up, whenever he wanted to, but had so far escaped more than mere reprimands. Now, however, it seemed likely he would get into trouble, for Captain Horton was not only a strict disciplinarian, but had a grudge against Larry for something the young Irishman had done that had not suited him. So now, when Larry replied that the captain had no right to address mean remarks to the young lady, it made the officer very angry.

"You impudent Irish scoundrel!" he roared. "What do you mean by speaking so insolently to me?"

"Oi mane phwat Oi say, sur."

"See here. Do you know who I am?" swelling up his chest.

"Yis, Oi know who yez are."

"Then you know I am your commanding officer, don't you?"

"Oh, yis, Oi know thot."

"Well, do you know that I can have you thrown in the

guard-house and kept there a week for talking insolently to me?"

"Oi dunno about it, but Oi suppose yez could do thot same av yez wanted to."

"I could; and if you open your mouth to address me before you are spoken to again, I shall most assuredly have you placed in the guard-house."

"Oh, yez will?"

"Yes, I will."

"Shure, an' Oi'll not say anither worrud, sur, av yez'll only lave the young leddy be."

"I am not going to let the young lady be, either. I am going to have the kisses. She wants to be kissed, you fool, and is only pretending that she doesn't. It's the way of girls, the world over."

"That is false," cried Mary, her eyes flashing. "I don't know how it may be with your English girls, but with the girls of America your statement does not apply. When we say we don't want to be insulted we mean it."

"Mere talk!" sneered the captain. "I know the women like a book, and they all like to be kissed and made love to."

"Not by every one who comes along, Sir Captain," replied the girl. "I suppose that almost every girl at some time in her life encounters some man whom they would be glad to have make love to them, and kiss them, but if you think that girls want to be treated thus by every man who comes along, you are badly mistaken."

"Bosh!" said the captain. "You can't deceive me, my pretty rebel miss, and I am going to have the kisses. I don't expect to have much trouble in securing them, either. I don't think you will struggle very hard—ha, ha, ha!" and again the captain started toward the maiden.

The girl recoiled, and put out her hands and motioned the officer back.

"Oh, sir, if you are a man, please do not insult me in this fashion," she said pleadingly.

"Insult, my pretty maiden?" with a laugh. "Why, it is not an insult I am offering you, but an honor."

"I do not so consider it, sir, and I beg of you to go your way, and let me alone."

"Just as soon as I get the kisses we will go, my rebel miss, and not before; so the quicker you yield and favor me with the kisses the quicker you will get rid of me."

"But I cannot permit you to kiss me, sir. I cannot—I will not."

"But I say you must!" cried the captain, anger in his tones now. "Come, stand where you are, and act like a sensible girl."

The officer was advancing as he spoke, and seeing he was in earnest, the girl whirled suddenly, and darted through the open doorway close at hand, into the house.

The captain, giving utterance to an angry exclamation, started to follow, but found his way barred by the "Wild Irishman."

The frank-faced soldier had remained silent as long as possible, and when he saw his captain start to follow the

girl, he could not control himself, and with a bound he placed himself between Horton and the doorway.

"Back wid yez, capthin," he said, waving the officer back. "Shame on yez, to want to make a poor gurrel so much throuble!"

"By heavens, Holt, but this does settle it!" cried the captain, fiercely. "You have gone entirely too far, and when we get back to Camden into the guard-house you go for a week! Perhaps, when you come out again, you will know more than you do now."

"Mebby so, captain," was the imperturbable reply. "But av Oi kin kape yez frum insulthin thot swate little gurrel, Oi'll be more than willin' to spind a wake in the guard-house, so Oi wull."

Larry Holt was such a jolly, lively, good-natured fellow that he was liked by all his comrades; and Captain Horton was so big-headed, self-important, and overbearing as an officer that he was heartily disliked by the majority of his men; so the sympathies of the other soldiers were with Larry, but they feared he had made a bad mistake in showing insubordination. They knew Captain Horton, and felt that he would see to it that the "Wild Irishman" was punished for his temerity.

"Out of the way!" roared Captain Horton fiercely.

"Oi must reffuse to move, sur, unless yez give me your wurrud thot yes won't bother the young leddy inny more."

"If you don't stand aside, I'll run you through," and the captain started to draw his sword.

The girl had paused just within the house, and had seen and heard all, and now she appeared in the doorway, and said pleadingly, while she placed her hand on Larry's shoulder, he being close at hand:

"Oh, sir, stand aside, for I fear he will kill you!"

But the young Irishman's blood was up. He was as brave as a lion, and the sight of his commander drawing a sword had no effect other than to make him even more determined.

"Oi'm sorry to refuse to obey yez, young leddy," he said, in a gentle voice, "but Oi'll sthand roight here till Oi'm made mhove, so Oi wull!"

"Out of my way, I tell you!" cried the captain as the sword flashed in the air. "Out of my way, or I'll kill you, as sure as my name is Horton."

"Yez won't dhare do it, captain," said Larry, without flinching. "Av yez wur to kill me, yez'd be kilted yersilf, so yez would."

"Not by a long shot. You are showing rank insubordination, and have interfered with me, your commanding officer, and I have a right to cut you down if I want to."

"Yez may have the moight, but Oi deny thot yez have the roight."

"It's all the same; out of the way or die!"

"Do yez mane it, capthin?" asked Larry, a peculiar intonation to his voice.

"I most assuredly do mean it!"

"An' yez 'd run me through jhust fur interfherin' an' kapin' av yez frum insulthin' the young leddy?"

"I would, and will! Stand aside, or die!"

The voice was firm and fierce, and there was no doubt that the speaker meant what he said.

"All roight, thin," said Larry, very quietly. "Av yez r'ally mean it, Oi'll—do thot!" and as he spoke the last two words, out shot his fist.

His action was wholly unexpected by the captain, and the young Irishman's fist struck the officer fair between the eyes, knocking him down with a thump.

"Hurroo!" cried Larry, his face alight with the enthusiasm of war. "Thot's the way Oi thrate omadhouns loike him, phwat go in fur insulthin' av helpless young leddies! Whoop!—hurroo!"

CHAPTER II.

THE "WILD IRISHMAN" AT WORK.

Mary Martin leaped out and seizing hold of Larry, pushed him with all her might, crying, excitedly, tremblingly:

"Oh, sir, go! Go at once! He will kill you when he gets up. Flee while you have the chance!"

"That's good advice, Larry," said one of the soldiers who stood near, in a cautious voice. "The captain'll shoot you dead as a herring when he gets up."

"But Oi'm not goin' to lave the little gurrel to be insulted by the spalpane," protested Larry.

"You can't help her after you are dead," the soldier replied. "Go at once, Larry."

The blow which the Irishman had given the captain was a terrible one, and it, with the concussion when the officer's head struck the ground, rendered him temporarily almost unconscious. He was dazed, and lay there, gazing up at the sky, winking and blinking, and seeing more stars and meteors than he had ever taken notice of before at one time.

"Please go, sir!" pleaded the girl. "Go, and save your life. Please do!"

The Irish youth turned his head and looked into the eyes of the maiden keenly and searchingly, and with eagerness in the expression on his face.

"Shure, an' phwy should yez care phwat happens to me?" he asked. "Jhust let me sthay here an' have it out wid the captain. Oi have got to do it, wan toime or anither, innyway."

"Why should I care what happens to you?" exclaimed the girl. "Didn't you interfere in my behalf, and take your life in your hands in order to protect me from insult. That is reason enough why I should care what happens to you. Go, please go! He will be on his feet again in a few moments, and then you will lose your life."

"Go at once, Larry," advised the friendly soldier. "The captain'll order us to shoot you, likely, and we'll have to obey, and you know we don't want to be the death of you, comrade."

The Irish youth hesitated. He did not want to go. He felt that as he had gone so far, he might as well remain and have it out to the bitter end with the captain. He had struck his commanding officer, and that was a crime that would bring a terrible punishment, he knew; and he felt more like standing his ground and fighting it out with the captain.

While he hesitated, undecided what to do, the officer scrambled to a sitting posture, and glared around him.

His eyes fell upon the face of Larry Holt, and a roar not unlike that of a wounded lion escaped his lips.

"I'll have your life, you Irish scoundrel!" he cried, hoarsely. "I'll shoot you like the dog that you are! I'll run you through, you bog-trotter!" and he scrambled hastily to his feet.

"Bog-throtter, am Oi?" cried Larry, angered. "Thin Oi'll show yez phwat a bog-throtter kin do, so Oi wull!"

He leaped forward and dealt the captain another blow, and down the officer went, kerthump. He was not rendered unconscious by this blow, however, as he had turned his head in time to make it a glancing blow, and even while scrambling to his feet he was feeling for his pistol, and yelling to his men.

"Seize the scoundrel, men! Seize him, or shoot him, I don't care which. He has struck me, his commanding officer, and he shall die!"

But before the soldier could act—or rather, before they did act, for they did not seem to be in any very great hurry—Mary caught hold of Larry, whirled him around, and with more show of strength than might have been expected from a girl like her, pushed the stalwart young Irishman through the doorway, into the house. Then she leaped through after him, and closed and barred the door.

By the time this had been accomplished the captain had got to his feet, and was raging like a madman. The soldiers were making a great show of zeal in obeying his orders, now, but his commands were so various and conflicting that they were enabled to seize upon this fact as an excuse for not doing anything in particular.

Seeing they were not doing anything, the officer forced himself to become more calm and rational, and then he ordered his men to surround the house.

"And be quick about it," he said. "We must not let that scoundrel of an Irishman escape. He has struck me twice, and I shall not rest until he meets with the punishment such action deserves."

The soldiers hastened to surround the house now, and they hoped that Larry had seized upon the opportunity afforded him by their inaction during the past half-minute or so, to make his escape.

But Larry had not made his escape from the house. He was still there. The girl was excited, and had not thought to try to get him to slip out at the rear door and make his escape, and Larry would not have gone willingly, anyway, for he had fallen in love with the pretty American maiden, and it was happiness the most exquisite to be near her. He was one who never worried about the future; he lived in

the present, and he was willing to enjoy the company of the girl, even though a man who hungered for his blood stood just on the other side of the door.

Mary suddenly thought of the back door, however, and exclaimed: "I must fasten the back door, or they will get in there, right away!"

She hastened along the hall, to the rear, and Larry accompanied her, and forestalled her, taking up the bar and placing it across the door.

"Shure, an' such work is not fur the swate littlle hands av a maiden loike yees," he said, giving Mary a look out of his frank blue eyes that brought a blush to the girl's face and made her heart beat faster—for the young Irishman was a manly-looking fellow, and Mary had taken a sudden liking to him.

They had just got the door barred when it was tried from without, and a voice called out:

"The back door is barred, captain."

"Then likely the Irish scoundrel is in there yet!" was heard in the officer's voice.

"Perhaps so, captain."

A moment later there came a knock on the door.

"Hello, in there!" called a voice, which the two recognized as being that of Captain Horton.

"Hillo, yersilf, an' see how yez loike it," retorted Larry, defiantly.

"He's in there, all right, boys!" cried the captain.

"Good! We'll have him out in a jiffy, and then we'll make him wish he had never been born."

"Mhebbly yez wull, an' mhebbly yez won't," muttered Larry.

"Oh, sir, I'm afraid you will lose your life, after all!" said Mary. "I'm so sorry, and shall feel guilty, for it was for my sake that you got into trouble."

"An' wouldn't Oi wade knee-deep in throuble fur the sake av such a swate littlle gurrel as yersilf, miss?" the young Irishman exclaimed, giving the girl a look to match his words and tone. "Shure an' av Oi lose me loife, it'll be lost in a good cause, so it wull!"

"But I don't want you to lose your life," the girl said, blushing. "I want that you shall live, as you deserve to do."

"Shure, an' do yez, indade?" cried Larry, delighted. "Begorra, thin, it's a big foight Oi'll be after makin' fur me loife, since Oi know yez wants me to live; but av yez don't care whether Oi live or whether Oi don't, thin Oi'll open the dure, an' walk roight out an' say to the capthin, 'Here Oi am; do phwat yez wull wid me!'"

This was showing his hand with a vengeance, but the Irish youth was impulsive and warm-hearted, and he had fallen head over ears in love with the pretty American maiden, and he was almost in earnest in his statement, for if she were to say she didn't care whether he lived or died he would not have cared a cent, either, and would just as soon have walked out and faced the wrath of the captain as not.

But he didn't have to do that. Mary was almost as

much taken with the Irish youth as he was with her, and she laid her hand on his arm, looked up in his eyes, and said:

"But I do want you to live. I should be very, very sorry if you were to lose your life."

"Hurroo!" cried Larry. "Oh, it's joyful an' happy Oi am, an' Oi don't care who knows it; nor do Oi care two shillin' fur the capthin out there, who is eager fur the blood av mesilf. Oi fale as if Oi could thrash the hull crowd av thim all by mesilf. But," lowering his voice, "the byes are friendly to me, an' Oi'd hate to have to hurt innny av thim, so Oi would."

The captain had been giving his men some instructions, and now he came back to the door and knocked upon it, crying out, authoritatively:

"Open the door, Larry Holt!"

"Sure, an' Oi'll do nothin' av the koind, Capthin Horton," was the defiant reply.

"You might as well do so."

"Phwy?"

"Because, if you don't, we will break the door down."

"Yez had betther think two or three toimes afore yez do thot, capthin."

"What do you mean?"

"Oi mane thot av yez bhreak the door down it's mesilf 'll make yez wish yez hadn't done it."

"What will you do?"

"Oi'll foight!"

"Bah! What could you do against nine of us?"

"Oi'll do the best Oi kin."

"Folly! We will overpower you without any trouble."

"Yez are mistaken, capthin. There'll be trouble, an' plinty of it."

"If you should kill or wound one of us, Larry, it would be your death-warrant."

"Shure, an' Oi think it wull be thot, innnyway, av Oi give up, an' so Oi am goin' to sthick it out, an' foight to the death. An' Oi'll make shure to put a bullet through yez, Capthin Horton, if Oi niver do innnythin' else, fur yez are the cause of all the throuble."

"Bosh! you caused the trouble, yourself."

"Oi did not; yez caused it by botherin' the young leddy."

"That was all right, and none of your business. You ought not to have interfered."

"Oi'm glad Oi did interfhere, an' Oi'd do the same ag'in."

"All right; then you won't open the door?"

"Oi wull not!"

"Then we'll smash it down. Bring a battering-ram, men!"

CHAPTER III.

LARRY REFUSES TO FLY.

There was a wood-pile near at hand, and the chopping-log was a goodly-sized, solid stick eight or ten inches in diameter, and seven or eight feet long.

Six of the redcoats picked up this log, and advanced, in obedience to the command of their captain. They did not seem to be very eager or enthusiastic, but the officer did not notice this, his mind being on other things.

"My men are here in front of the door, with a log in their hands. One blow from the log will be sufficient to burst the door down. Now, for the last time, I call upon you to open the door."

Such were the captain's words, but there was no reply.

He waited a few moments, and then muttering angrily, he cried:

"Smash the door!"

The redcoats swung the log forward, and the end struck the door near the center. It was a pretty hard bump, but while the door shook and rattled, it did not give way. The bar across it was a strong one, and held well.

"Not hard enough!" cried the captain, angrier than ever. "Put your force into the effort, and make a success of it this time."

Again the men swung the log, and this time the door was unable to withstand the assault. Down it went, the bar having given way in the middle, and the way of entry was open to the redcoats.

But neither Larry nor the girl were to be seen.

"They have gone upstairs," cried the captain. "Into the house and after them, men. We must capture that Irish scoundrel, and make an example of him."

The captain hung back; evidently he had not forgotten what Larry had said, to the effect that he would shoot the officer the first one. The men noticed their commander's action, and seized upon it for an excuse to hang back also. The truth was they did not like the work they were engaged upon. They did not approve of the captain's action in attempting to make the girl give him some kisses, in the first place, and secondly, they were warm friends of Larry, and did not want to do him an injury.

"Go ahead; what are you hanging back for?" cried Captain Horton, angrily.

"For the same reason you are, captain," replied one of the men, more bold than the others. "We're afraid to go in front, for fear some one of us will get the bullet that Larry intends for you."

The officer colored up, and muttered an angry exclamation. He saw he could not hold back and make his men take the most dangerous work, however, and so he entered the house, with a great show of bravery.

"I am not afraid of a cowardly Irishman, if you men are!" he declared. "If he shoots at me it will be the last thing he will ever do in this world!" and he flourished his pistol in an extremely menacing manner.

The captain was right when he stated that Larry and the girl had gone upstairs.

As soon as they heard him order the men to bring the battering-ram they realized that they must get out of the way, and Mary had seized hold of Larry's arm, with the words:

"Come with me; we will go upstairs."

"It's mesilf 'll go innywheurs wid yees, littlle lump of swateness thot yees are!" said Larry, as the girl jerked him along the hall at a rapid rate, in order to hide her confusion. Of course, he was more than willing to go, or she could not have got him along.

Opening a door, the girl led the way into what was evidently the sitting-room. She closed the door, and fastened it by sticking a wooden pin above the latch, and then led the way across to a rude wooden stairway.

Up this they went, and were in another hall. Along this they moved rapidly, and the girl paused only when they reached the end of the hall.

Opening a door on the right-hand side, she pushed the youth through into the room, and followed.

The room was bare and was evidently unused, and fastening the door as best she could, the girl hastened across to the one window, and looked out. There was only one redcoat in sight. The others were evidently within doors.

"This window can be opened, and there is a shed, the roof of which is only three or four feet below the sill," the girl said. "If it wasn't for that soldier, yonder, you could escape."

"Shure, an' thot's Tommy Hall, me chum in the company, an' he'd no more shoot me than he would his own fadther, Miss Mary," said Larry, after glancing out.

"Then you can easily escape! Hasten, sir," and she tried to open the window, which for some reason stuck fast.

"Wait a minnet, Miss Mary," said Larry. "Shure, an' Oi'm not goin' to go away an' lave yez to be insulted by thot spalpane of a captain, so Oi ain't!"

"He won't hurt me, now. He is too eager to catch you, and won't pay any attention to me. Go, please go!"

At this moment steps were heard in the hall, and the sound of voices.

"They are coming!" the girl cried. "Go, please go!" and again she tugged at the window.

Larry seized hold of the window and jerked it open. Then he looked out, saw the roof of the shed was only a short distance down, and that it was not very slanting, and lifting Mary, he deposited her on the roof, and followed just as there came a crash against the door.

The soldier on the ground, who had been called Tommy Hall by Larry, glanced up, saw the two, realized what they were doing, and then giving Larry a prodigious wink, turned his back and deliberately walked around the corner of the house, out of sight.

"Yez see?" breathed Larry, grinning broadly, "Tommy isn't goin' to be witness to our escape, d'ye moind? Oh, Oi'll tell yez Tommy's the roight sort, so he is."

"We must hasten!" breathed the girl. "The door will not hold them in check any time at all."

Then they made their way down the sloping roof of the shed, and just as they reached the lower edge they heard a crash.

The door had given way!

Without a word Larry lifted Mary gently in his arms,

and leaped to the ground, which was perhaps twelve feet distant.

The impact, when he struck the ground, jarred Larry considerably, but he did not mind it, and taking a moment of time to place the girl on her feet, he caught her by the hand, and said:

"Come along, darlint! Shure, an' we'll git away from the spalpane, afther all."

They ran along the side of the house, to the corner, turned here, and were at the front of the house.

At this moment a cry escaped the lips of Mary:

"Look! Yonder comes a party of horsemen! Perhaps they are friends!"

"Yez are roight, Miss Mary," said Larry. "An' Oi hope they are frinds, begorra, fur Oi'd loike to see thot coward av a capthin have to run loike a scared wolf, so Oi would!"

The soldier who had remained out of doors, Tommy Hall, saw the approaching party of horsemen at almost the same moment the girl did, and he dashed into the house, through the rear doorway, and yelled to his comrades:

"Come down, fellows; come down instantly! A party of strange horsemen is coming, and I think they are rebels! Hurry!"

The redcoats who were upstairs heard, and the captain gave utterance to an exclamation of anger.

"Come, men!" he cried. "We must not let ourselves be caught like rats in a trap. Hurry!"

The eight men hastened downstairs and out of doors, and a glance around the corner of the house in the direction indicated by Tommy Hall was all that was needed.

"Rebels!" exclaimed the captain, in a tone of angry disappointment. "We will have to get away from here in a hurry, men. Follow me!"

He dashed away toward the timber, which was nearly a quarter of a mile distant, and his men followed at the best speed of which they were capable. It was a hard matter for them to keep anywhere near their leader, however, for he was a good runner, and on this occasion he seemed to be out-doing himself. The fact was that the captain was not as brave as he tried to make out that he was, and when there was danger to be apprehended, and he could escape from it by a show of speed, he was more than willing to do so.

The horsemen who were coming down the road saw the fleeing redcoats, and uttered yells, and made an effort to catch them before they could reach the shelter of the timber. In this they failed, however, as they had to stop to let down some fence bars, and thus lost enough time so that the redcoats were enabled to get in among the trees before their pursuers could get within pistol-shot distance of them.

Having failed in catching the nine redcoats, the horsemen, of whom there were perhaps a dozen, turned their horses' heads, and rode back to the house, and around to the front, where they found a stalwart redcoat and a

beautiful girl engaged in an animated conversation. The fact was that Mary, fearing Larry might get into trouble with the newcomers on account of the fact that he wore a British uniform, was trying to persuade him to take refuge in flight, the same as his late comrades had done, but the "Wild Irishman" refused to go.

"Oi won't lave yez, Mary, dear!" he said. "It's mesilf as has stharterd in to purtect yez, an' begorra, Oi'm goin' to do it. How do Oi know but these spalpanes may be worse than the capthin himself?"

He had just made this plea in answer to Mary's arguments and entreaties when the horsemen rode around the corner of the house, and paused in front of the two, and of course then it was too late to try to take refuge in flight, even had he wished to do so, which he did not.

The horsemen were young men of perhaps nineteen to twenty-one years of age, and were bright-looking, handsome, and manly fellows, and the girl's heart grew lighter as she noted this fact.

"Surely they cannot be bad men," she said to herself. "And I believe that they will be ready to listen to reason, and will not injure this brave young man who took my part against his own commanding officer, thus taking his life in his hands."

The young man who was evidently the leader of the party of horsemen eyed the two keenly and searchingly.

"Your pardon, miss," he said in a clear, pleasant voice, "but may I ask the meaning of this affair?" And he doffed his hat and bowed gracefully.

"The British soldiers whom you saw running away were robbing my home of everything in the way of valuables that they could find, sir," was the reply.

"Ah, indeed? But you, sir," nodding toward Larry. "why have you remained behind? Why did you not take refuge in flight, the same as your comrades have done?"

"Shure, sur, an' Oi was in betther business," was the reply, with such a comical brogue and twist of the face that a smile came on the faces of the horsemen.

"Ah, indeed? What was the business, if I may ask?"

"Bein' fadther, mither, brother, an' sisther to this young leddy, sur, av yez plaze. She was all alone here, sur, an' Oi consthitooted mesilf her purtictor, sur, an' though she did her best to get me to go, Oi wouldn' do it, fur says Oi to myself, says Oi, 'Larry, me bye, it may be thot these sthrangers may be bad min, an' the thing fur yez to do is to stand yer ground an' purtict the young leddy wid yer loife, if nade be, in case they should prove to be spalpanes—an' thot's phwy Oi'm here, sur, insthid av scootin' through the timber loike thim ither fellows are doin', sur."

CHAPTER IV.

LARRY JOINS THE "LIBERTY BOYS."

"All of which speaks well for you, my friend," said the young man, eyeing the Irish youth with an interested air. "I see you are a British soldier."

"Shure, an' Oi wur a British soldier, sur."

"Were?"

"Yis."

"You mean that you are not one now?"

"Thot's phwat Oi mane."

The young men all looked surprised, and stared at the speaker inquiringly.

"How is that?" asked the spokesman. "Why are you not a British soldier now?"

"Well, fur wan r'ason, it's mesilf is ashamed to be a British soldier inny longer."

"Ashamed, eh?"

"Shure an' Oi am."

"Why se?"

"Fur the reason thot Oi don't apphrove av the way they have of insulthin' swate young leddies by wantin' to kiss thim, sur."

The young man looked at the Irishman with interest.

"You don't approve of that, eh?" he remarked.

"No more Oi do, sur; yez see, it's mesilf has a swate sister back in the ould counthry, an' Oi think av her, an' whin Oi see the soldiers botherin' an' insulthin' the young leddies, it makes me mad an' ashamed fur to be seen wid 'em."

"And I don't blame you. One thing is sure, your feelings do you great credit. But is that the reason you are no longer a British soldier?"

"Yis, sur; it led up to the throuble, an' now on account av the throuble, Oi don't want to go back to the British army."

"What was the trouble?"

"Oi'll tell yez. Yez see, me commandther, Captain Horton, who thinks he is loved by all the gurrels thot sets eyes on him, wanted the young leddy, here, to give him a kiss, an' she reffused; but thot only made him the more eager, an' he wur goin' to take a dozen, he said, by force, but Oi couldn't sthand thot, sur, an' Oi interfered, an' it made him mad, an' he wur goin' to run me through wid his sword."

"Ah, ha!"

"Oi couldn't stand thot, sur, fur Oi'm as much in love wid loife as inny ither man, an' so Oi gives him a smack achune the eyes an' knocks him down."

"Served him right!"

"So it did!"

"You did the correct thing, old man."

"Yes, he needed killing."

Such were a few of the remarks given utterance to by the horsemen.

"What did the captain do, then?" asked the spokesman.

"Shure, an' as soon as he got his sinses back he wanted fur to kill me, so he did, but Oi knocked him down ag'in, an' thin the litthle gurrel an' mesilf went into the house an' barred the doors. They broke in the back door an' got into the house, an' so we rethreated upstairs an' wur climbin' out through the windy whin yersilves kim in

soight. Thin wan av the soldiers saw yez comin' an' warned the rist, an' they got out of the house and run fur their loives, as yersilves wur afther seein'."

"Exactly; and now, if I understand you aright, you do not wish to return to the British army?"

"It would be as much as me loife is worth to do it, sur."

"You think the captain would have it in for you?"

"Shure an' he would; he's a bad wan, sur, so he is."

"Well, if you are not going back to the British army, what will you do?"

"Shure an' Oi dunno," was the reply, with a scratch of the head, "unless the young leddy here wull let me sthay an' be her purtictor all the toime," this last with a comical grin.

The young men smiled and the girl blushed rosily.

"That would be rather a pleasant task," said the young man. "It certainly would beat soldiering."

"Shure an' it would," with an admiring glance at the girl. "But Oi'm afraid the young leddy wouldn't agree to it."

"Father and mother will be home soon," said Mary, "and then I will have protectors, you know."

"Roight yez are, Miss Mary," nodded the Irish youth. "An Oi don't see phwat Oi'm to do fur a livin' frum now on, shure an' Oi don't."

"What is your name?" asked the spokesman of the party of horsemen.

"Larry Holt."

"Well, Larry, you have cut loose from the British, you say, and will have to do something, so why not join the patriot army?"

"Yez mane the ribel army, sur?" remarked Larry.

"The British call it the rebel army, but we are not rebels, Larry. We are patriots, fighting for our homes and for our country."

"Shure an' thin yez are pathriots?"

"We are; we belong to a company of young men of whom you may have heard. We are called 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

"Shure an' it's mesilf has heard av yez, many's the toime!" exclaimed Larry, his eyes lighting up.

"I have heard father speak of the 'Liberty Boys,' many times, sir," said the girl.

"Is your father a patriot, miss?" asked the young spokesman of the party.

"Yes, sir."

"Begorra, an Oi've made up me moind," exclaimed Larry.

"Have you?"

"Yis."

"And what have you decided upon?"

"Thot frum this day on Oi'll be a pathriot!"

"Good for you, Larry!" approvingly. "I am sure you will never regret your decision."

"Oi'm shure av it, too, sur," with a side-glance at the patriot girl.

"I'm so glad you have decided to become a patriot!" exclaimed Mary.

"Hurroo! thin it's deloighted Oi am that Oi have become a pathriot," the Irish youth cried. "Shure, an' it's mesilf 'd do innnythin' to make yez glad, me darlint."

The girl blushed again, but did not look displeased, and the young men, who were observant fellows, decided that the handsome, stalwart son of Erin had made his way into her good graces.

"Are you Mr. Dick Slater, sir?" asked the girl, addressing the spokesman of the party, speaking more to hide her confusion than for any other reason.

"That is my name, miss. And if I may ask, what is your name?"

"Mary Martin, sir."

"Shure, an' are yez r'ally Dick Slater?" asked Larry, a look of interest on his face, as he eyed Dick keenly.

"I am, Larry," was the reply.

"Phwy, Oi don't see thot yez look innny different from the rist av the byes," said Larry, in a tone of surprise.

"Did you think I would look different from the rest, Larry?"

"Shure, an Oi did."

"Why so?"

"On account av the wonderful sthories Oi have heard about yez. Oi thought yez must be a giant, begorra, an' yez are no bigger than the rist av the byes."

"You are right, I am not so very great in stature, Larry," was the smiling reply.

"But he gets larger when in battle, Larry," said Bob Estabrook, who sat next to Dick. He was a jolly, irrepressible youth, and was Dick's right-hand man, and a lifelong friend and companion, they having lived neighbors for years. "I have heard redcoats say he looks as big as the side of a house at such times."

"Shure, an' thot's phwat Oi was afther thinkin'," said Larry, soberly. "Judgin' by the sthories Oi have heard av him Oi thought he must be as big as the soides of two houses."

The Irishman's tone and air were so droll that all had to laugh.

"Say, Larry, why not join my company of 'Liberty Boys'?" remarked Dick.

Larry's face lighted up.

"Oi'd loike thot betther than innnythin' in the worruld, sur," he replied.

"Good! then you may consider yourself a 'Liberty Boy'."

"Hurroo! It's happy Oi am to think thot Oi'm to be wan av the famous 'Liberty Byes'!" exclaimed Larry; and then his face lengthened, and became sober.

"What's the matter?" asked Dick.

"Shure, an' Oi have no horse. Phwat am Oi to do? Oi can't kape up wid yez on foot."

"Oh, we have extra horses and extra uniforms."

"Have yez, indade? I'd like to get rid of this English uniform."

"At our encampment up the river a ways, you will be supplied."

"Thot's all roight, thin."

"Yes; you won't have to walk."

"There come father and mother!" exclaimed Mary, at this juncture. "I'm so glad."

A team and wagon were seen coming down the road, a quarter of a mile distant; in the wagon were a man and a woman.

The man drove up in front of the house and stopping the team, stared about him wonderingly. He looked at the dozen horsemen, at Larry, with his British uniform on, at Mary, and then at the piles of clothing, furniture, and provisions lying on the ground, and then, turning his attention again to his daughter, exclaimed:

"What in the world does all this mean, Mary?"

"Yes, what does it mean?" supplemented her mother.

"I'll tell you just what it means, father and mother," the girl replied; and then she explained.

"Well, well, so the redcoats have been here, have they?" Mr. Martin exclaimed. "And you interfered against the captain of the party, and protected my daughter from insult, sir?" to Larry. "Permit me to thank you. It was very kind of you, indeed, and you will find that we know how to be grateful."

"Thot's all roight, sur," said Larry, bowing awkwardly. "Oi have a sishter av me own over in the ould counthry, an' Oi couldn't stand shtill an' see the capthin kiss the littlile gurrel ag'inst her will, sur. It wasn't much thot Oi done."

"Wasn't much!" exclaimed Mary. "You risked your life, and you know it, Larry."

"Shure an' Oi'd estame it an honor to risk all me loives fur yez, Miss Mary, av Oi had as minny av thim as a cat!" declared the young Irishman, and Mary blushed and looked confused.

Dick Slater and his "Liberty Boys" now got down off their horses and helped carry the clothing, furniture, and provisions back into the house, after which they bade Mr., Mrs., and Mary Martin good-by, and took their departure, going back up the road in the direction from which they had come only half an hour or so before.

And Larry Holt, the "Wild Irishman," accompanied them.

CHAPTER V.

THE "WILD IRISHMAN" MAKES A HIT.

Of course, the "Liberty Boys" went slowly, for Larry was on foot, and could not go fast.

It was only about two miles to the encampment of the "Liberty Boys," however, so Dick told the young Irishman, and he laughed and said that was only an exercise jaunt.

He walked beside Dick's horse, and the captain of the

"Liberty Boys" plied Larry with questions regarding the British at Camden. He asked how many there were of the British, how strong the works were, what the British intended doing, and everything of that kind, and Larry answered all the questions to the best of his ability, for he was now a stanch patriot and willing to do anything and everything possible for the cause of liberty and independence.

By the time the patriot encampment was reached Dick had secured a great deal of valuable information from the new recruit, and he congratulated himself on having made such an addition to the ranks of the "Liberty Boys."

The arrival of the party of youths, with the young man in their midst occasioned considerable excitement in the encampment.

Because of the fact that Larry wore a British uniform the "Liberty Boys" supposed he was a prisoner, but they soon learned their mistake; and when they were told that Larry was to become a "Liberty Boy," and fight against the British, they gave utterance to exclamations of delight and satisfaction.

"That is good, I tell you!" said one.

"Yes, and he is doing the right thing now."

"We are always glad to get recruits."

"Yes, and taking him away from the British and adding him to our force makes it count double, you see."

Such were a few of the exclamations given utterance to by the youths.

There was something about the frank, open face and merry blue eyes of the young Irishman that appealed to the youths, and they took a liking to him at once. They engaged him in conversation, and it did not take them long to learn that he was bright, witty, and chock full of fun.

"Say, he is all right, isn't he!" said one youth to another, after Larry had got off some funny remark that made them all laugh.

"You are right. He will be a boon to us, for he will keep us livened up with his funny sayings."

Larry, too, on his part, was greatly pleased with the "Liberty Boys." He saw they were lively, jolly fellows, good-natured and manly, and he told himself he was fortunate in having fallen among them.

Some of the youths, with proclivities for joking, attempted to have a bit of sport with Larry, but he was always ready with an answer, and managed to turn the laugh on them with such unfailing certainty and ease that they soon got enough of it, and were glad to quit.

And Larry did not mind it. He rather enjoyed it, for he knew there was no ill will back of it, but simply a desire to have some fun.

Dick Slater and his comrades who had been with him told how Larry had taken the part of a patriot maiden, and knocked his own captain down twice in protecting the girl from insult, and this earned for Larry the respect and admiration of all the "Liberty Boys." It was something that appealed to their sense of chivalry, and they felt that

a young man who would do what Larry had done was all right, and worthy of being a comrade.

One of their number proposed three cheers for Larry Holt, the new recruit, and the cheers were given with a will, though the voices were held in check considerable, as the youths did not know but there might be enemies within hearing distance, should they cheer loudly.

It was now time to get supper, and the youths went to work, and cooked and ate their frugal repast. This done, they settled down to take things easy.

They sat around, on logs, and on their blankets spread on the ground, and laughed and talked, and told stories, and finally Larry was asked to tell a story.

He complied, and told a story that brought forth shouts of laughter from the hearers. The story itself was a good one, but the manner of the telling aided greatly in making it effective, while the inimitable brogue helped also.

Larry had been furnished with a Liberty Boy's uniform, and had doffed the British uniform, and now he looked much like the other "Liberty Boys." He said he felt better.

"Shure, an' it's mesilf is glad to get rid av thim ridicomplicted duds, so Oi am," he declared.

"And I don't blame you," said Bob Estabrook.

"Do you think you will like to fight for Liberty and Independence, Larry?" asked Sam Sanderson.

"Oi do," was the reply, and then a sober look came over the youth's face for a moment. "There's only wan thing thot Oi don't loike about it," he added.

"What is that?"

"Oi may have to foight ag'inst some av me ould chums in the company Oi was in. There are some foine byes among the redcoats, though av course whin the officers egg thim on, they are likely to do things thot they oughtn't to do."

"Yes, that would be bad, if you were to have to fight some of your old chums," said Dick. "But you may never meet them on the field of battle."

"It's mesilf hopes thot same, fur av Oi wur to mate some av thim, Oi'm afraid Oi'd shut me eyes an' shoot too high, so Oi would."

"And no one would blame you for that, Larry."

"But would they be as careful not to hurt you, do you think?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Would they?" in an enthusiastic tone. "Shure, an' the wans phwat wur me chums would, ye kin wager! There's Tommy Hall, now, the bye phwat allwus called me the 'Woild Oirishman,' he would sooner shoot his fadther than mesilf!" And then Larry told how Tommy Hall had seen him and the girl climbing out of the window, and had deliberately turned his back and walked around the corner of the house out of sight.

"He is the right stripe, that fellow," said Bob Estabrook. "I'm glad to know, Larry, that there are some such men among the British soldiers."

"Oh, they're jhust loike most min, sur," was the reply. "Av they act worse than they ought, it is the blame av the

officers, minny of whom are moighty bad min, an' no misthake."

"And so they called you the 'Wild Irishman,' did they?" asked Bob Estabrook, with a grin.

"Shure, an' the byes phwat loved me the most wur afther callin' me thot," was the reply.

"Well, it's a good name, and as soon as we fall in love with you we'll call you by it, too, Larry."

"All roight. Shure, an' Oi don't care phwat yez call me, so ye call me in toime to be on hand fur grub."

The "Liberty Boys" saw they had gotten hold of a jolly comrade, and were delighted, and they asked him to tell them another story. Larry demurred, but they kept on insisting, and finally he said:

"Oi'll till yez phwat Oi'll do. It's mesilf 'll give yez a dance, so Oi wull."

"A dance! A dance!" cried a number.

"Yes, yes!"

"That's just what we want, Larry."

"The very thing!"

"You couldn't please us better than by dancing."

"All roight; Oi'll do it. Jhust wait a minnet."

Larry rose and went into the timber a little ways, and looked around till he found a club which looked somewhat like the far-famed shillelah so dear to the Irish heart. He returned to his place, and whirled the stick so dexterously as to elicit exclamations of amazement and delight from the spectators.

"Say, you are all right, Larry," said Bob Estabrook. "You handle that stick like you were used to it."

"Begorra, an' Oi used to be the champion wid the shillelah in the part of the ould counthry whur Oi lived, so Oi did," was the reply. "Minny's the hid Oi've cracked on Fair days."

The "Liberty Boys" could not doubt the truth of this statement, after witnessing the manner in which the young Irishman handled the stick.

Larry tramped down a place, making it smooth and level, and then, without further urging, while several began whistling, he began dancing.

Club in hand, the "Wild Irishman" danced a lively jig, giving vent to an occasional lusty yell, while the "Liberty Boys" laughed heartily and applauded without stint.

The Irish youth was a splendid dancer, and evidently enjoyed it fully as much as did the spectators, for there was a broad grin on his face, and presently he burst into a song, and sang in a resonant, but melodious voice, keeping in time to his dancing.

This brought forth additional applause, and the "Liberty Boys" said to themselves that they were indeed fortunate in having secured such an addition to their company.

They were young, and liked sport and jollity, and this young Irishman was so full of spirits that he would help keep things livened up, and it would not be so gloomy in camp.

Finally Larry finished his dance by leaping in the air and cracking his heels together three times before coming

down, and at the same time whirling his stick in a most dexterous manner, and bowing to the youths, he asked, with a broad grin:

"Shure, an' how do yez loike it?"

"It is the best we ever saw, Larry."

"It was great!"

"It was splendid, old man."

"The 'Wild Irishman' is all right."

"Three cheers for the 'Wild Irishman'!"

Such were a few of the remarks, and the three cheers were given, the youths making up in vehement gesturing with arms, what they lacked in loudness of voice, for they did not dare yell loudly, for fear there might be redcoats near enough to hear them, and come and investigate.

"Oi'm glad yez loiked the dancing," said Larry, a pleased look on his face.

"How could we help liking it, Larry?" asked Dick, patting the Irish youth on the shoulder. "You are the best dancer we have ever seen, and you can handle a stick in a way that is amazing."

The other youths said the same, and complimented Larry till he grew red in the face with confusion, and jumped to his feet and motioned for them to cease.

"Oh, sthop! sthop!" he cried. "Shure, an' yez'll have me face as rid as the uniform Oi took off this avenin' av yez kape on. Stop, me byes, an' don't be makin' av me blush loike a gurrel, begorra."

The youths laughed, but desisted, much to Larry's relief.

One of the "Liberty Boys" now started to tell a story, but before he had got far with it, one of the sentinels came running up, and said that a party of redcoats was coming.

"To arms, boys!" cried Dick.

CHAPTER VI.

"THEY ARE THE 'LIBERTY BOYS OF '76.'"

The "Liberty Boys" had chosen their present camping spot with an eye to just such an emergency as this.

Their camp was right at the entrance to a ravine which extended back up into the hills.

The horses were tethered up this ravine, and it took the youths but a few moments to roll up their blankets, seize their muskets, and retreat.

As they came to their horses they untied the animals and led them along.

Then the animals were turned over to perhaps twenty-five of the youths, to look after, and the seventy-five then paused, and waited within one hundred yards of their late encampment, to see what the enemy would do.

"How big a force is it, do you think?" asked Dick of the sentinel who had discovered the approach of the enemy.

"I don't know, Dick. But I should judge that it is quite a large party."

And he was right. There was quite a large force of British close at hand.

When forced to flee from the Martin home, as already told, Captain Horton was very angry, and greatly disgusted and disappointed.

He anathematized Larry Holt, and told himself that but for the Irish youth they would now be safely on their way back to Camden, with the plunder they had taken from the Martin home.

"I'll get even with that scoundrel!" he said to himself. "I'll make him wish he had behaved himself, or my name isn't Horton!"

When assured that the strangers were no longer pursuing his party, the captain called a halt.

"I want to see who those fellows are, and what they intend doing in these parts," he said.

Then he told the men to stay where they were.

"I'll go and spy on them," he said. "Stay here till I come back."

He made his way by a roundabout course, till he got to where he could see the strangers, and he saw that they were engaged in conversation with Larry Holt and Mary Martin.

He watched them with eyes glowing with vengeful anger. "I wish I had a force here that was strong enough to cope with them!" he muttered. "I'll wager that I would break up that little party there in short order."

He glared at the horsemen and at Larry and the girl fiercely.

"That Irishman deserves death," he said to himself. "And if I had thought to bring my musket I believe I would have tried a shot at him."

But he had left his musket with his men, and the distance was too great for a pistol to carry.

"I'll have to wait till another time to get even with Larry Holt," he told himself. "And I will get even with him—I swear it!"

He watched the party intently, and saw that the newcomers were not disposed to harm Larry, and he said to himself that the Irishman probably had announced his intention of deserting from the British army.

"It would be just like him," he said to himself. "Those Irishmen don't think any too much of the English, anyway, and I have more than once suspected that he did not more than half sympathize with the king's cause."

Presently Mr. and Mrs. Martin arrived, and after quite a long conversation between them and the party of strangers, the latter dismounted and helped carry the clothing, furniture, and provisions back into the house.

"That is Larry Holt's fault," muttered the captain. "But for him we would now be halfway to Camden with those things in our possession. There was another wagon in the barnyard, and some horses in the stable, and I intended hitching up and loading all those things in and hauling them into camp in triumph."

He remained where he was till he saw the party of horsemen take its leave, and when he saw Larry Holt accompany them he was not surprised.

"Just as I expected," he muttered. "Larry has deserted, and gone over to the enemy. All right. We'll get hold of him before very long, and then we'll show him how the king's soldiers treat deserters and traitors!"

Then a thought struck him. Why not have one of his men follow the party, and learn where it came from, and all about it?

"The very thing!" the captain said to himself. "I'll do it," and he hastened back to where his men were.

"They have gone!" he exclaimed, excitedly, "and I want one of you men to follow them, and find out where they go. You do it, Jack. You are good at that sort of work."

"Which way have they gone?" asked Jack.

"Back up the road in the direction from which they came."

"All right. I'll trot along after them, but I can hardly hope to keep up with men on horseback."

"You can keep up with them. Larry Holt has gone with them, and is on foot."

"Oh, well, then I'm all right."

"Yes; and, Jack, when you have run them to earth, and learned where they hold forth, come back here to this farmhouse and wait for us."

"What are you going to do?"

"We are going to hasten back to Camden. I will report to General Cornwallis the presence of the rebels in this vicinity, and will ask him to permit me to come back here with a strong force, and make an effort to capture the scoundrels, whoever they may be."

"All right. I'll follow them to their headquarters, and then come back here and wait for you."

"That's it. Now hurry, or you may lose track of them, altogether."

Jack hastened away, and the others, after some delay, took their departure also, going toward Camden.

One or two of the men were for going to the farmhouse and plundering it, after all, and taking the plunder with them, but Captain Horton opposed this, saying it would cause too great a loss of time.

"We will attend to that later," he said. "Now we have other and more important work on hand."

So they hastened onward toward Camden, and after a walk of an hour and a half, reached there.

Captain Horton at once made his way to headquarters. "Well, what is it, Captain Horton?" asked Cornwallis, when the officer stood before him in his private office.

"I have to report, sir, the presence in these parts of a party of strange horsemen," said the captain.

"A party of horsemen, you say?" in surprise.

"Yes."

"Where did you see them?"

"At a farmhouse about six miles north from here."

"Humph! How many were there in the party?"

"About a dozen."

"Did they interfere with you in any way?"

"Yes. We were forced to flee, and leave a lot of plunder behind, that we had taken from the farmhouse in question."

"That is bad."

"Yes, indeed."

"You think the members of this party of horsemen are rebels?"

"I am sure of it."

"What makes you sure?"

"They chased us."

The general was silent a few moments, thinking, and then said:

"It is undoubtedly a fact that the horsemen you saw are rebels, and such being the case, it is likely that there are more of them than the dozen you saw."

"That is what I think, sir."

"Yes, there is no doubt regarding that—unless the party was made up of rebel farmers of the vicinity."

"I don't think that, sir, for they did not look like farmers."

"They looked like fighting men, eh?"

"Yes; they were uniformed. And by the way, general, I have to report that Larry Holt, one of my men, has deserted."

"Deserted!" in a voice of anger and amazement.

"Yes, and more, he went away in company with the party of horsemen."

"The scoundrel!"

"That's what I say. And now, I have come to ask if you will permit me to take a strong force and go after these rebels?"

"To be sure! Of course, captain. But how came the man Holt to desert?"

"I hardly know, sir; he just took a sudden notion to do so, I guess. He is an Irishman, you know, and I have long doubted his loyalty."

"Ah, indeed?"

"Yes; I was not much surprised, but I was angry, and I long for a chance at the traitor."

"Well, don't kill him, please, captain. I want that he shall be captured and brought here, so that I may make an example of him before the entire army. It will have a good effect, and teach the men that it will not pay to turn traitor."

"Very well, sir. I will bring him back a prisoner, if I possibly can do so."

"I suppose you wish to start after those men at the earliest possible moment, captain?"

"Yes, sir. I sent one of my men to follow the party, and spy out its hiding-place, however, and he is to return to the farmhouse and be there when we arrive. So I will not have much difficulty in finding my prey."

"True. That was a good plan."

"I think so. And now, how many men shall I take?"

"As many as you like; one hundred, one hundred and

fifty, two hundred—whatever number you think necessary."

"Well, I don't know how many of the rebels there are, but I should think one hundred men would be sufficient to take."

"I would think so. But take more if you like."

"Well, I'll take one hundred and fifty," said the captain. "I know that will be enough."

But he did not know it; he simply thought he knew it.

Having been given permission to do what he wished to do, the captain hastened away from headquarters, and selected his men.

This did not take long, and then they set out on their journey.

They walked at quite a lively pace, and arrived at the farmhouse a little while after dark.

The spy Captain Horton had sent after the party of horsemen was there, waiting, and he hastened to report to his captain.

"You followed the party, Jack?" the captain asked, eagerly, before the other could speak.

"Yes, captain."

"And did you learn where they are staying?"

"I did."

"Good! How many are there of them? I suppose there are more than the dozen we saw?"

"I should say so!" was the reply. "There are at least one hundred of them, captain."

"So many as that?" almost gasped the officer.

"Yes, and they are red-hot rebels, too, the very worst rebels in the world, Captain Horton."

"What do you mean, Jack?"

"I mean that I discovered who and what they are."

"Well, who are they, then? Out with it."

"They are 'The Liberty Boys of '76.'"

CHAPTER VII.

THE REDCOATS SURPRISED.

The captain was greatly astonished.

He had heard of "The Liberty Boys of '76" many times.

The youths who constituted the company known by the name were well known all over the North, and had become very well known in the South.

They had made a great reputation as being desperate fighters on the field of battle, and their young commander, Dick Slater, was famous as the best and greatest spy of the Revolution.

There was a price on his head, indeed. General Horton had offered five hundred pounds for the youth's capture, and many attempts had been made to win the reward, but far all such attempts had signally failed.

The captain glared at Jack for a few moments in silence, and then gasped out:

"They are the 'Liberty Boys,' you say, Jack?"

"Yes, captain."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely certain of it, captain."

"And there are at least one hundred of them?"

"Yes."

"Then all I have to say is that I am glad I brought one hundred and fifty men, instead of only one hundred. Those 'Liberty Boys' are terrors."

"They are, for a fact," agreed Jack.

"Perhaps we may be able to take them by surprise, however," said the captain, musingly, "and if we can do that we can kill half their number before they know what has happened."

Jack shook his head.

"You may take them by surprise," he said, "but I doubt it."

"You think it can't be done, eh?"

"That is my opinion of the matter. I have heard a great deal of the 'Liberty Boys,' and from all I have heard it will have to be a keen lot that takes them by surprise."

"Oh, they are only human, Jack. They are not infallible."

"I know that; but they are veterans, and are not the fellows to permit themselves to be taken unawares."

"We'll try it, anyway."

"It can do no harm to try it; but I think you will find it will be a failure."

"We shall see."

Then the captain gave the order to march, and he and Jack led the force, Jack acting as guide, of course.

They were in no particular hurry, so they marched at a moderate pace, and it was an hour before they arrived in the vicinity of the "Liberty Boys' " encampment.

A halt was called, and Jack explained where the camp was located, and the captain told the men what was expected of them.

Then, when an understanding had been arrived at, the order was given to advance.

The redcoats attempted to creep up close to the "Liberty Boys' " encampment, and get in a volley on them before they were aware of the presence of an enemy, but the sentry, as has been shown, discovered their approach, and warned Dick, and the "Liberty Boys" retreated back up into the mouth of the ravine.

The redcoats were unaware that the intended prey had escaped, however, until they were close upon the campfires; then they stared at the place where the enemy should be, but was not, in amazement.

"They have slipped away!" gasped the captain, bitter disappointment in his tone.

"What did I tell you?" remarked Jack.

"I half believe you are glad of it!" growled the captain, who was ready to vent his ill humor on anyone

"Oh, no, captain. I wish that we had been able to take

them by surprise, but it is as I thought it would be. We have failed."

"I wonder where they have gone?"

"There is the mouth of a ravine just the other side of the encampment, captain. Likely they have retired into it."

"That is it, you may be sure," was the reply.

"What will you do?"

"Follow them!"

"You must not forget who they are, captain," said Jack.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that it will be well to go slow, or you may meet with the experience you intended treating them to."

"Ah, I understand. You think they may surprise us?"

"Yes."

"I don't think there is much danger of that. My idea is that they are retreating as rapidly as possible."

"You must not forget that these fellows are the famous 'Liberty Boys,' captain."

"Bah! I do not fear the 'Liberty Boys.' I fancy they are only human, and can be killed, just the same as can other soldiers."

"Well, they seem to be pretty hard to kill. I have heard it said that in spite of their recklessness on the field of battle, they lose fewer men than any three or four companies having the same number of men."

"That is because they are horse soldiers; cavalry do not lose so many men, proportionately to their number, as do infantry."

"That may be; but the 'Liberty Boys' lose fewer men than do any other company of horse soldiers, so it is said."

"Bosh! I don't care what is said of them. I am not afraid of them, and I intend following them up, and giving them the worst thrashing they have ever had!"

"You had better send scouts ahead, then, captain, so as to avoid being ambushed."

"Of course I shall do that. Do you suppose I don't know my business?"

"Oh, no, I have no such thought, captain," was the reply, but to himself Jack said that he doubted the ability of the captain to cope with a man of such proved shrewdness as Dick Slater.

The captain selected Jack and one other man in whom he had considerable confidence, as being good scouts, and sent them ahead, to see if they could discover any signs of the "Liberty Boys."

Signals were agreed upon, and on hearing the signals the main force would move forward.

Jack and his comrade stole forward, first skirting the encampment, keeping back in the shadows of the trees, so as to avoid being seen, in case the enemy was near at hand. When they had reached the farther side of the encampment they entered the mouth of the ravine, and made their way slowly and carefully along.

They were dealing with youths who were not only keen and shrewd, but were as skilled in woodcraft as the red Indians of the forest, however, and the youths discovered the approach of the scouts before they were themselves discovered, and promptly concealed themselves along the sides of the ravine, amid the brush which grew there.

Jack and his brother scout did not discover the presence of the enemy, and moved on down the ravine a distance of more than one hundred yards. Of course, the twenty-five "Liberty Boys," who had charge of the horses, had moved on down the ravine, and were out of hearing.

Fancying that the coast was clear, as far as they had already come, Jack and his comrade gave utterance to the signals agreed upon, keen, tremulous whistles.

Hearing the signals, the captain gave the order to advance, but told the men to skirt the encampment, so as to keep in the shade of the trees.

This was done, and then the British soldiers marched into the mouth of the ravine, and continued onward till they came to where the two scouts stood.

"Is the coast clear?" asked the captain.

"Seems to be," was the reply.

"And you have seen or heard nothing of the rebels?"

"We have neither seen nor heard anything of them," was the reply. "I begin to think you were right, and that they are retreating as rapidly as possible."

"Of course that's what they are doing. They are no more than any other men, and finding that they are outnumbered they have fled, that is all."

But the captain was to be shown that he was mistaken, and that quickly.

Even as he finished speaking there was a series of flashes from the bushes at both sides of the ravine, and at the same instant, seemingly, the crack, crack, crack! of scores of muskets was heard.

It was a surprise, if ever there was one.

The British had not been expecting anything of the kind, and the volleys that were poured into their ranks were demoralizing in the extreme.

They were deadly, too, for many of the redcoats fell, dead or wounded, and soon groans and shrieks went up on the night air.

Yells and commands went up also, the yells being given utterance to by the redcoats, and the orders coming from Captain Horton.

He was not the bravest man in the world, by any means, but this sudden attack had rendered him desperate, and he shouted to his men to return the fire.

They obeyed and fired several volleys in the directions from which the shots came that had damaged them to such a serious extent.

But still the volleys were being fired from the ravine's sides, and at last the redcoats could endure it no longer, and broke and fled for their lives.

Dick Slater detected the movement instantly.

"After them!" he cried. "Up and after them, 'Liberty Boys'!"

With wild cheers the youths obeyed, and charged upon the rear of the party of fleeing redcoats, and cut down a number with their swords.

They chased the redcoats clear out of the ravine, and stopped only when they came to the point where they would be in the light from the camp-fires. Dick feared the redcoats might stop just beyond the encampment, and pour a withering fire into the ranks of the "Liberty Boys." So he called a halt, and the redcoats were permitted to get away.

The youths then made their way back, and by the faint light of the rising moon managed to take a fairly good survey of the field.

Two "Liberty Boys" had been killed, and four more were wounded, but not very seriously. The redcoats, however, had suffered much more severely. There were eighteen dead and ten more who were wounded. Of the ten, seven were not seriously injured, and would be all right in a few days. Three were severely wounded, however, and would certainly die, unless taken to some place where they could receive good nursing and the care of a physician.

The death of two of their comrades saddened the "Liberty Boys," but they had long since learned to look upon such things in a philosophical light; it was to be expected, and so there was no use of worrying about it.

The "Liberty Boys" who had charge of the horses had heard the firing, and leaving the horses, had rushed back to the assistance of their comrades, but got there only just as the redcoats were retreating; so they had only got to strike a few stragglers blows.

The youths buried their two dead comrades, and then made ready to take their departure.

"I dislike to go away and leave you wounded men here to suffer," said Dick to one of the wounded redcoats. "But some of your comrades will surely be back here soon, to look after you."

"Yes, I—think—so," was the reply. "I don't—blame you for—looking out—for—yourselves."

"That is the way to look at it," said Dick.

Then he gave the order, and his men moved away up the ravine.

"We must find another and even safer camping-place, boys," Dick said, when they were away from the vicinity of the wounded redcoats. "I think the enemy will remain in this vicinity, and make every effort to strike us a severe blow, and likely they will send to Camden for more men."

"Well, they'll need more men," said Bob Estabrook, grimly. "They haven't a much stronger force than ours, and we can thrash them every day in the week, unless they get two or three times as many men."

And this was the opinion of the majority of the "Liberty Boys."

CHAPTER VIII.

SENDING FOR REINFORCEMENTS.

As soon as the party of youths had departed, one of the redcoats who had been wounded only slightly, rose and

hobbled away in the direction taken by his comrades when they fled.

He hoped to find them before having to go very far, and he did.

He was just crossing the ground lighted up by the campfires of the deserted encampment when he was hailed by some of his comrades, who asked him where he was going, and where the "Liberty Boys" were.

"The 'Liberty Boys' have gone," he replied.

Captain Horton and his men at once came forth, and surrounded the wounded man, and he told his story.

"Well, if they have gone we will go back and bury our dead and look after our wounded," said the captain.

He gave the order, but was careful to send four men ahead to scout around and beat up the sides of the ravine, to make sure there would not be another ambush.

When the spot was reached where the encounter had taken place sentinels were placed out in all directions, and the redcoats proceeded to bury their dead, and look after the wounded.

When this had been finished a council of war was held and it was decided that they should return to the home of Mr. Martin, and force him to admit the three seriously wounded men into his house and take care of them.

"If he refuses we'll burn his house over his head," the captain declared.

"Oh, he won't refuse; he won't dare," said the man named Jack.

The three severely wounded men were carried by a number of their comrades, but those who were not so seriously wounded managed to walk, with the assistance of a man on either side to steady them.

It took the party nearly two hours to reach the farmhouse, as the progress was necessarily slow, and the members of the household had gone to bed.

Captain Horton soon had them up, however, and as soon as they had dressed the door was opened, and Mr. Martin asked what was wanted.

"We have three wounded men here," was the reply, "and you must find a place for them in your house, and take care of them till they are able to get out again."

"All right, sir," was the reply. Mr. Martin knew it would be no good to protest or object. The redcoats would take possession of the house, if he was to show a disposition toward not wanting to give shelter to the wounded men.

"That is sensible talk," said the captain. "Just lead the way to the room where our comrades may be taken care of."

The farmer did so, and led the way to a room on the ground floor. It was a bedroom that was not in use by any of the members of the family, and the wounded men were soon occupying comfortable quarters.

Then the captain went out and told his men to go into camp.

"You are not going to give up trying to wipe the 'Liberty Boys' out, then?" asked the scout called Jack.

"I am never going to give up," was the reply. "I am going to keep after the rebel scoundrels till I kill them all or drive them clear out of the country."

"We'll have to have more men, then."

"I know that, and I am going to send for them."

"When?"

"At once; or as soon as I have written a letter to General Cornwallis."

"Ah!"

"When I have finished the letter, I want that you shall take it to Camden, Jack."

"All right."

"You are to deliver it into the hands of General Cornwallis."

"But he'll be in bed and asleep."

"No matter. This is important enough so that he must be awakened."

"All right, if you say so."

"I do say so."

Then the captain entered the house, took a seat at a desk at one side of the sitting-room, and wrote a letter, which he sealed up and placed in the hands of the scout, Jack.

"Now away with you," he said. "Place the letter in the hands of the general at the earliest possible moment."

"I'll do it, captain."

Then Jack took his departure.

Captain Horton was too tired to make himself unpleasant that night, but he had given Mary Martin one or two looks that had made her tremble; the looks were full of malice, and the girl thought she detected something in the way of a threat, too.

When the officer threw himself down on a blanket spread on the floor of the sitting-room and went to sleep Mary was glad.

Meanwhile Jack was hastening through the timber, in the direction of Camden.

"I wish I had thought to take one of the old farmer's horses," the redcoat thought. "I don't see how it happened. I didn't think of it. I'm not much of a rider, true, but I can ride after a fashion, and it would beat walking."

He had already gone a mile, however, and he continued onward.

He was a good walker, and reached Camden after the lapse of an hour and a half.

He was challenged by a sentinel, but gave the countersign, and was permitted to pass right along, so did not lose any time.

He went straight to the house occupied by General Cornwallis and the officers of his staff.

He knocked on the door, and after a delay of several minutes the door was opened by an orderly.

"What is wanted?" he asked.

"I am a messenger, and have a letter for General Cornwallis," was the reply.

"He is asleep."

"Waken him."

"I would not dare do so unless the matter were of importance—"

"It is of the utmost importance. Waken him immediately, and then show me to his room."

The orderly knew Jack by sight, and was aware that he was a scout and stood high in the regards of the general, so he said:

"Come in. I'll wake the general up, and tell him who wants to see him and what you have said."

"Do so, and hurry about it."

Jack entered the house and took a seat in the waiting-room, while the orderly hastened to the sleeping-room of General Cornwallis.

He awakened the general, and as soon as the officer was able to understand the orderly explained matters to him.

"Show him into my private office, orderly," said Cornwallis, "and tell him I will be with him in a few moments."

The orderly bowed and withdrew, while the general got up and donning a dressing-gown, made his way into the office, which adjoined his sleeping apartment.

"Ah, Jack, what is it?" the general asked, somewhat eagerly. He realized that he would not have been disturbed away in the middle of the night if something of importance had not occurred.

"I am a messenger from Captain Horton, sir," said Jack. "I have a letter here which will explain all, I judge."

He handed the general the letter, which was seized and opened with nervous fingers.

The general read the contents of the letter eagerly, and a dark frown gathered on his face like a thundercloud as the import of the contents was gathered.

"Zounds, this is terrible!" he exclaimed. "Captain Horton says here, Jack, that his force was ambushed by the 'Liberty Boys,' and that eighteen men were killed and a number wounded!"

"It is true, sir," was the reply.

"You were in the combat, Jack?"

"Yes, though we didn't do much save make ourselves scarce, general. There was no combat."

"You fired several volleys before retreating, did you not?"

"Yes, but I am sure we did no damage to speak of."

"And so the party of horsemen that you saw at the farmhouse in the afternoon was a portion of the company of 'Liberty Boys,' eh?" exclaimed the general.

"Yes, sir."

"And Captain Horton has only one hundred and fifty men!"

"He has less than that number now, sir."

"I know; and the 'Liberty Boys' number at least one hundred, do they not?"

"Just about that number, sir."

"And they are equal to four hundred ordinary soldiers."

"That is the way I figure it."

"It is unquestionably true. And I see by this letter

that Captain Horton wishes me to send reinforcements, so he can go ahead and crush the 'Liberty Boys.'"

"I supposed that was what he wished done."

"Yes; he asks for one hundred and fifty more men, but that will not be sufficient, yet. I know Dick Slater of old, and know that it will take an overwhelming force to do anything against his veterans."

"How many men will you send, sir?"

"Three hundred."

"I think myself that it will require at least that many more men to give the captain a fair chance to get the better of Dick Slater and his 'Liberty Boys.'"

"That is the way I look at it, too. Well, I will send the men, so that they will be at the farmhouse, ready to get to work the first thing in the morning."

"And what shall I do, general?"

"Go to your quarters and get two or three hours sleep. I shall expect you to guide the force to the farmhouse."

"Very well, sir," and Jack took his departure.

About three o'clock in the morning a force of three hundred British soldiers marched out of Camden and away in the direction of the home of Mr. Martin.

CHAPTER IX.

JOKING LARRY A BIT.

The "Liberty Boys" kept on up the ravine a mile, and then climbed the slope on the lefthand side and walked in this direction, leading their horses till they came to the Catawba River.

At this point the river made a great bend, and there was a neck of land perhaps two hundred yards wide extending out into the stream. The land on this neck was higher than that anywhere else around, and was heavily timbered, there being a great deal of underbrush, also.

The point of land was shaped like an egg, with the big end out in the river, the small end at the shore, where it was only seventy-five to one hundred yards across.

The moon was up high enough, now, so it was possible for the "Liberty Boys" to see the lay of the land, and Dick at once decided that this would be a splendid place for a camp.

There was several good points to the location.

One was that the neck of land was almost wholly surrounded by the waters of the stream, and this would make it impossible for the enemy to surround them, and crush them with a superior force.

Another good point was the fact that where the neck of land joined the mainland it was only seventy-five to one hundred determined fighters could hold quite a little army at bay.

Another thing was that there was plenty of water to be had; they would never have to surrender on account of thirst.

The bad point about the location was that they might be cooped up, and be unable to get away, in case they should wish to do so.

Hunger, too, might drive them to surrendering; but this could be provided against, by laying in a supply of provisions, and Dick made up his mind that this should be the first work done when morning had come.

"We'll make this our camping-place," said Dick, after having sized everything up. "I think it is the best place we could find."

"I think so, Dick," said Bob.

"It may be some time before the redcoats find us here."

"And they may wish they hadn't found us, when they do."

"We'll try and have it come out that way, Bob."

So the "Liberty Boys" went into camp, and made themselves as comfortable as possible. Sentinels were stationed at the point where the neck of land joined the mainland, and the other youths lay down and went to sleep.

Next morning they were up bright and early.

A frugal breakfast was prepared and eaten, and while thus engaged, the "Liberty Boys" talked of the engagement of the night before.

"Well, Larry, how did you like fighting against your late friends?" asked Dick, addressing the young Irishman.

"Shure, an' Oi loiked it all roight, sur," was the reply. "Yez see, Oi couldn't see inny wan to know them, an' so Oi fild all roight."

"That is good. It would be bad if one were to see a friend on the opposite side. He would hardly know what course to pursue."

"Shure, an' Oi don't want to be afther mating inny av me ould fr'inds in battle, but it's mesilf 'd loike to come facin' thot spalpane av a Capthin Horton, bad luck to him. Oi'd make short wurruk av him, so I would!"

"He's the fellow who wanted to kiss the girl over at the farmhouse?" asked Bob with a sly twinkle in his eyes.

"Yis."

"We can understand why you don't like him," said Bob, with a grin, and a peculiar stress on the "him."

"Thot's all roight," he said. "Shure, an' Oi'm swate on thot littlde gurrel, so Oi am, an' Oi don't care who knows it."

"That's the way to talk, Larry," said Mark Morrison, approvingly.

The other youths nodded assent, and many made remarks to the same effect.

"She's a nice girl, Larry," said Dick, "and I don't blame you for being sweet on her."

"Shure, an' don't yez go in fur to git ahead av me, Capthin Dick!" exclaimed Larry, with such a look of dismay on his freckled face as to bring laughter to the lips of the majority of the youths.

"You need have no fear on that score, Larry," with a smile. "I have a sweetheart of my own up in New York state."

"Yes."

"Well," with a sigh of relief, "it's mesilf is moighty glad of it."

And then the youths roared.

"But I haven't any sweetheart," said Bob, swelling out his chest, and looking very sober and impressive. "And more than half believe that I will go in and see if I can capture that little girl, Larry."

The "Wild Irishman" looked at Bob for a few moments most searchingly, and in silence, and then a broad smile came over his face.

"Go on wid yez!" he said. "Yez are afther loying to me an' Oi know it."

"Right you are, Larry!" cried one.

"Yes, he has a sweetheart."

"He was just trying to make you jealous."

"You needn't worry about anything he says, Larry."

"You'll soon find out what kind of a chap he is."

"Shure, an' Oi know phwat koind av a chap he is, a riddy," with a grin.

"What kind of a chap is he?" asked Sam Sanders.

"Shure, an' he's a pritty good sort av a chap, fur th most part, but, loike mesilf, he can be a turrible loir whi he wants to be."

This turned the laugh on Bob, who was just the boy to take it without getting angry. Indeed, he laughed as heartily as any one.

"Larry, you're all right," he said, when the laughter had subsided. "For a 'Wild Irishman,' you seem to have pretty good discernment."

"Thank yez," said Larry gravely. "Yez are a loivel lad, Bob, an' it's mesilf loikes loively byes."

"You're rather a lively lad yourself, Larry," said Mark Morrison.

"Shure an' Oi kin kape me end up, av Oi'm falin' well, was the modest reply.

"What part of Ireland are you from, Larry?" asked one of the boys.

"From Dublin."

"Then you're a lively lad from Dublin, Larry, my boy," said Bob.

"Thot's phwat Oi am."

"How do you like this country, as compared to Ireland?"

"Shure, an' up to yestherday avenin' Oi didn't loike it well," was the reply, "but now Oi think it is the most beautiful country in the worruld."

"What has changed the looks of the country so quickly, Larry?" asked Sam.

"Why, he saw Mary Martin yesterday evening for the first time," said Bob quickly. "What a silly question, Sam."

"Shure an' thot's it, Bob, me bye," said Larry, soberly. "Yez same to know how it is yourself."

"You may be sure I do, Larry. I've seen lots of houses in my time, but the handsomest house in the world for is a certain not over large one up in New York State. My sweetheart lives there, and that makes the house beautiful."

none others that I have ever seen are half so handsome, even though they may be mansions."

"That's it, that's it, Bob!" cried Larry. "Yez have it, too, the same as Oi have, begorra; shake hands on it," and he reached out his hand, which Bob took and shook heartily.

The extremely sober and serious look on Larry's face as he spoke amused the "Liberty Boys," and they laughed heartily, and when Larry reproached them for so doing they told him it was all right, and they didn't mean anything by it.

"Don't pay any attention to them, Larry," said Bob, with a grin. "The fellows that are laughing are the ones who have no sweethearts, and of course they don't understand. Just wait till they get sweethearts of their own, and then they'll be worse than we are, and we will laugh at them."

"Shure, an' we wull!" grinned Larry. "Oi hope they'll all succeed in gettin' swatehearts before they are much older, but Oi don't want innay av thim to try to get mine away from me."

He doubled up his fists and looked pugnacious, and the youths could not help laughing again.

"They won't any of them try it, Larry," said Bob. "But if they should I'll help you, and we'll give them such a thrashing as they have never had administered to them in their lives before."

"All roight; it's a bargain, begorra."

When the meal was ended, Dick gave his orders.

One-half the force was to remain in the encampment, ready to hold off the British, in case they put in an appearance; the other half was to divide into two parties of twenty-five each and go out on a foraging expedition.

"We must secure a lot of provisions and store them here in camp," said Dick. "Then if the redcoats find us and try to starve us out we will be in a position to laugh at them."

This having been decided upon, the two parties set out.

One of the parties was under the command of Dick, and when it had proceeded a distance of two miles the home of the settler was reached.

The "Liberty Boys" found the farmer out in the yard, sitting wood, while an awkward youth of perhaps eighteen years was piling the wood up in ricks.

The two paused in their work, and stared at the youths with an open-mouthed amazement.

"Good-morning," said Dick.

"Mornin'," was the reply from the man, while the youth merely nodded his head.

"What is your name?" asked Dick in a business-like manner.

"Smock—Jim Smock, sir," was the reply. "an' this heer is my boy, Joe," indicating the youth.

"Tory or rebel?" asked Dick.

The man hesitated and glanced at the youths half-fearfully. It was plain that he did not know what answer to make; the "Liberty Boys" wore no disguises, so he had

nothing to give him a hint regarding which side they were on. They might be "rebels," and then again they might be Tories.

"I—I hain't neether wun, sir," was the stammering reply, after a few moments' hesitation.

"Neither one, eh?"

"That's right, sir. I hain't neether Tory nor rebel."

"Well, it doesn't matter, anyway," said Dick, with a smile. "If you had said you are a patriot we would have asked for a donation of some provisions. If you had said you are a Tory we would have demanded some provisions. But as you are neither Tory nor patriot we shall ask for and demand some provisions, and leave you to take your choice of the two propositions."

"Ye—want—some—purvisions?" exclaimed the man, with a blank look on his face.

"Yes. Come along, boys, and we will see what Mr. Smock has in his cellar."

CHAPTER X.

FORAGING.

"Oh, say, ye wouldn't take my purvisions whut I have put in ther cellar fur to use nex' winter, would ye?" the man cried.

"We need provisions, sir, and will have to do so," replied Dick. "I am sorry, but it can't be helped. We cannot fight unless we have food, sir, and so we will help ourselves."

A fierce-looking woman came rushing out of the house as the youths walked toward it.

"I heerd ye!" she cried, flourishing her arms, and glaring at the "Liberty Boys." "I heerd ye say ye wuz goin' ter take our purvisions, an' I say ye hain't goin' ter do nothin' uv ther kind. Ther best thing ye kin do is ter go away about yer bizness, er some uv ther British soldiers'll come erlong an' make ye wush't ye hed stayed erway."

"Ah, ha, what have we here?" remarked Bob, with a comical look on his face.

"Shure, an' it's a rig'ler ould tiger-cat she's afther bein'!" remarked Larry, in what he intended to be in a voice too low for the woman to hear, but she was evidently possessed of remarkably good hearing, and she whirled upon the "Wild Irishman" like a tiger, sure enough.

"A tiger-cat, am I?" she cried, leaping forward. "I'll show ye how to speak onrespectful uv a woman, thet's whut I'll do!" and before Larry knew what was coming the termagant had seized him by the hair and was pulling at it with all her might.

"Ouch—ow!" almost howled Larry. "Oh, fur the love av goodness, take her off, some av yez! Don't be afther standin' there an' seein' her pull all the hair out av me hid! Ouch—ow!"

"I'll 'ouch—ow' ye!" almost screamed the woman. "I'll

show ye how ter tork insultin' of a woman old enough ter be yer mother."

"Begorra, an' it's glad Oi am thot yez are not me mither," cried Larry. "Av yez wur, Oi'd go off an' jhump into the river, so Oi would!" As he said this, the young Irishman tore the woman's hands loose from his hair—not without losing some, it may be said in passing—and hurled her backward. It happened that Mr. Smock, who had hastened forward when the woman emerged from the house, was right in the woman's way, and she was thrown against him. She was so angry and excited that she could not see straight, and mistaking her husband for one of the strangers, she caught him by the hair and jerked him around at a great rate, talking rapidly and vehemently the while, and it was some time before the man could make her understand that she had got hold of her own husband instead of one of the enemy.

As may be supposed, the "Liberty Boys" were highly amused and entertained. It was funny enough when the woman had hold of Larry, but it was ten times more funny when she got hold of her husband, and the youths fairly shouted with laughter, and kept uttering encouraging remarks all the time, this aiding in making it more difficult for the man to make his wife hear his words, and understand who he was.

When she learned the mistake she had made she stood still, glaring at the laughing youths with a look of rage and hatred on her face. She was panting from the violence of her attacks on Larry and her husband, however, and did not seem to feel capable of making another effort just at the moment; she took it out in looking daggers.

It was amusing to watch Larry and hear the remarks he gave utterance to after he was freed from the hands of the woman. He felt of his head gingerly, making such a wry face the while that the "Liberty Boys" roared.

"How do you like America, now, Larry?" asked Bob.

"Shure an' Oi loike Amiriky purthy well—in spots," was the reply, with such a lugubrious look that the youths laughed louder than ever.

"This isn't one of the spots, eh?" asked Mark Morrison.

"Oi should say not, Mark, me bye! This is wan av the spots phwat Oi could niver take a loiking to."

"It is too lively here for you, eh?" from Bob.

"Shure an' it is. Oi'm a pretthy loively bye, mesilf, but this is a bit too much fur me."

"Whut in blazes d'ye meen, Hanner?" half-gasped, half-howled Mr. Smock, feeling of his head gingerly. "By thunder, I berleeve ye hev pulled out ha'f uv my hair, so I do."

"An' sarves ye right, Jim Smock, fur being in ther way," was the retort. "I hain't er mite sorry fur ye, so I hain't."

"Air ye goin' ter let these heer robbers take whatever they wants ter, Jim Smock?"

"How kin I he'p myself, Hanner," was the growling reply.

"I'll bet thet ef I wuz er man I'd find er way ter he'p

myself," was the reply. "But as I'm on'y er weak woman, I kain't do ennythin'."

"Wake does she be afther callin' av hersilf?" murmured Larry, with a grimace. "Begorra, an' Oi don't call her wake by innny manes, an' Oi think she has done considerable alriddy."

"Your husband is powerless to do anything, madam," said Dick, addressing the woman; "and the best thing you can do is to keep quiet and not interfere. We would hate to hurt a woman, but we must at least protect ourselves if attacked."

"She's no woman, but a tigress, begorra!" murmured Larry. He was careful not to speak loud enough for to hear him, for he had had one experience with her did not want another.

"Come, boys, we must get to work," said Dick, addressing his comrades, and they went down into the cellar and began selecting what they wanted.

Two of the "Liberty Boys" remained outside to keep watch, to see that those in the cellar were not surprised by the approach of redcoats, and they were obliged to submit to a tongue-lashing from the woman.

"Shure an' Oi'm glad Oi ain't out there!" chuckled Larry. "Jhust listhen to the woman!"

The youths found a lot of provisions that would be a great help to them, and they took such as they wanted, and each youth was well laden with something when they came up out of the cellar.

"Jest look at them!" cried the woman, her face black with rage. "Jest look at ther theeves! They've took most ever'thin' thet we hed stored up fur winter."

"Are you quife sure you had it stored for winter, madam?" asked Dick.

"Yes. What do you mean?"

"I mean that my idea is that you intended taking these provisions to Camden and selling them to the British," was the cool reply. "It is a bit early to store up provisions for the winter."

"Wal, et hain't none uv yer bizness whut we intended doin' with ther purvisions," the woman cried. "They're our'n, an' we hev er right ter do whutever we wanten with 'em."

"And this is wartime, you know, madam, and as soldiers, we have the right to take such provisions as we need, wherever we may find them."

"I hope ther purvisions'll choke ye when ye eet 'em!" was the venomous reply.

"I guess there is no danger of that," with a smile. "Well, let's be going, boys."

The party set out through the timber, and the youths were watched by the man, woman, and youth till they were out of sight. Then the youth who had been called Joe by his father, spoke:

"Say, dad, them theer fellers is rebels, hain't they!"

"Thet's whut they air, Joe," was the reply.

"Yas, rebels an' theeves!" said Mrs. Smock, viciously.

"Wal, say, dad, I've er good min' ter foller 'em an' see whur they go."

"Whut good would thet do?"

"W'y, don' ye see?—then I c'u'd go ter Camden an' tell Gin'ral Cornwallis whur theer is some rebels, an' he c'u'd send some uv his sojers an capter er kill 'em."

"Say, thet's er good idee, Joe!" his face lighting up. "Hurry, er ye'll lose track uv 'em."

"Theer hain't no danger. They air loaded down with thet stuff they took frum us, an' won't be able to go very fast. I'll soon git in sight uv 'em."

"Wull ye be back heer afore ye go ter Camden, Joe?"

"Mebby so; mebbly not."

Then the gawky youth shambled away in the direction taken by the "Liberty Boys."

He entered the timber, and hastened onward, for he was eager to catch sight of the party. Joe thought he was playing a sharp trick on the young men who had taken the provisions, and was chuckling to himself over how he would cause their discomfiture by spying out their stopping-place and going to the British at Camden with the information. He forgot, however, that others might be up to tricks as well as himself. The result was that he was taken by surprise.

He was walking along, peering ahead, when of a sudden two youths stepped out in front of him, with leveled pistols in their hands. They were Sam Sanderson and Tom Rogers, two of the "Liberty Boys"—the two were not carrying any loads of provisions, and who had been on guard outside, while the others took the provisions out of Farmer Smock's cellar.

Dick had suspected that either Mr. Smock or his son would make an attempt to follow them, and had told the two to stop and secrete themselves, and wait till sure there was no attempt being made to follow them, and the youths had obeyed the order.

To say that Joe Smock was surprised is not telling all of it, by any means. He was almost paralyzed with amazement, and terror as well. He had stopped instantly on being commanded to do so—Sam having called out to him to "Halt!"—and one foot was in the air, and remained there rigid, as if frozen. Joe's underjaw dropped, and his face turned a sickly pallor.

The two "Liberty Boys" could hardly keep from laughing when they saw how terrified the Tory youth was, but they managed to keep their faces straight, and Sam said, in a severe voice:

"Well, young fellow, what does this mean?"

This seemed to cause the youth to come to an understanding of the situation, and he placed his foot on the ground and asked:

"Whut does whut meen?" He tried to look innocent, but it was useless; his face showed that he knew he was caught.

"You know well enough."

"No, I don't," was the reply. Joe was determined to try to brazen it out.

"Yes, you do; you were following us, with the intention of discovering our headquarters, so you could go to Camden and tell the British."

Joe was terribly frightened, and trembled visibly, while his face grew paler, if anything, than before.

"Yer mistook, mister," he stammered. "I wuzn't goin' ter do ennythin' uv ther kin'."

"I know that was your intention; and I know, also, that you are not going to do it."

"Say, misters, pleeze turn ther muzzles uv ther pistols in some other direction," pleaded Joe; "they mought go orf."

"It would serve you right if they did."

But Joe evidently did not think so, and stammered out something to that effect.

"I think it would be the best thing that could happen to you if we were to accidently shoot you," said Sam, gravely and soberly; "for when we take you into camp and tell our commander that you were following and spying upon us he will hang you up to a tree right off."

"Oh, fur goodness' sake, misters, don' take me ter 'im, then," Joe pleaded.

"It is useless to plead with us," said Sam. "We have caught you and we are going to take you along with us. Come along peaceably now, or it will be the worse for you."

Joe looked wildly around, as if contemplating taking refuge in flight.

"Don't you try it," warned Sam. "If you try to make a break for liberty we will put two or three bullets through you before you have gone ten yards."

A half-groan was Joe's only response, and seeing that the frightened Tory youth had given up all hope of making his escape, Sam said:

"You walk in front, Tom, and Joe will follow at your heels, while I will bring up the rear—and," shaking his pistol at Joe, "if you try to get away I will shoot you dead, just as sure as you are alive."

"I hain't goin' ter try ter git erway," was the reply.

"See that you don't; forward, march!"

Tom struck out through the timber, Joe following close behind, and at his heels came Sam, pistol in hand.

CHAPTER XI.

LARRY VISITS HIS SWEETHEART.

They walked quite rapidly, and soon overtook the party of "Liberty Boys."

"Ha! so he was following us, eh, Sam?" exclaimed Dick, when he saw the three.

"Yes, Dick."

"And you took him prisoner. That is good."

Sam explained all as they walked onward, and at last the encampment was reached.

The return of the party, with a lot of provisions, was hailed with delight by the fifty boys who had remained in

the encampment, and when they saw the youths had a prisoner they asked who and what he was.

They were told, and some of them took pains to tell Joe what would probably be his fate. Needless to say their statements were quite horrible enough to terrify a person like Joe, and he shivered in terror as he listened. He did not expect that he would ever live to return to his home.

Soon the other party came in, and it had secured a lot of provisions, also, and the "Liberty Boys" began to feel better and more secure.

"If the enemy doesn't coop us up here, too quickly, we may be able to secure enough food supplies to be enabled to bid them defiance," said Dick.

A week before the time of which we write the battle of Camden had been fought, and the patriot army, under General Gates, had been utterly routed and scattered to the four winds. The "Liberty Boys" had been in the battle, and had fought desperately, and when the patriot army broke and fled in all directions, they had decided to remain in the vicinity, and recuperate, as some of them had received wounds. They had other reasons for remaining. One was that they had heard that General Marion, the famous "Swamp Fox," was coming to that part of the country, and the youths wished to meet Marion. And by staying there they thought they might strike an occasional blow at the redcoats, who had settled down in Camden, seemingly with the intention of remaining there for some time. It was while out on a scouting expedition, the afternoon before, that they had happened to appear at the Martin home in time to be of service to Mary Martin and Larry Holt, the "Wild Irishman."

The two parties made another trip into the country that day, and returned laden down with more provisions.

"We will let this suffice for the present," said Dick. "We have enough provisions to last us a month, and I don't think there are enough British in the country to keep us cooped up here that long."

"That's right," agreed Bob Estabrook.

After supper that evening Larry Holt asked permission of Dick to visit the Martin home.

"Certainly you may go, Larry," said Dick. "But you must be very careful, and investigate before you make your presence known, as it is possible that there may be some redcoats there."

"That's roight, sur; Oi'll be careful, so Oi wull."

"Say, Larry, why do you wish to go to Mr. Martin's, anyhow?" asked Bob, with a mock serious expression on his face, but with a quizzical look in his eyes.

"Oh, yez know well enough phwy I want to be afther goin' there," was the reply.

Larry set out, and after a walk of an hour reached the Martin home. He remembered what Dick had said, and approached the house very cautiously. He listened around, and peered through the windows, and became convinced, presently, that there were no redcoats present, and so he knocked.

Mary herself came to the door, and she seemed both glad and sorry to see Larry.

The young Irishman saw this, and his heart sank.

"Shure, an' are yez not glad to see me, darlint?" he asked. "Av yez are not, say so, an' it's back Oi'll go, fasher than Oi kim, so Oi wull."

"Oh, yes, yes, I'm glad to see you, Larry," was the reply. "But there are three wounded redcoats here, and there is danger that some of their comrades may come here at any moment. You had better not stay, Larry, dear."

"Shure, an' Oi'll risk the spalpanes comin', now that yez have called me a pet name, darlint!" cried Larry, his face alight with joy. "It'll take more than wan of the rascals to scare me away, Oi'm tellin' yez."

He entered the house, and proceeded to enjoy himself. He shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Martin, and talked to them awhile, and then went into the kitchen where Mary was at work, and talked to her.

They spoke in rather low tones, and the conversation must have been very interesting, for Mary did not make the dishes rattle as she had been doing before Larry came into the room.

The Irish youth was an energetic and impulsive fellow, and he was so frank and open-hearted that he made no attempt to disguise the fact that he loved the pretty American girl, and she in her turn, following his example, let him know that she thought a great deal of him; as a result Larry was extremely happy.

But a storm was about to burst about the heads of the two.

Suddenly the door opened and into the kitchen walked Captain Horton!

"Ah, ha! I have you now, you traitor!" the captain cried fiercely, and he drew his sword.

A scream of terror escaped the lips of Mary.

At the same time, despite her physical terror at sight of the sword in the captain's hands, her moral courage asserted itself, and leaping in front of Larry, she shielded him with her own body.

"You shall not kill him, Captain Horton!" she cried. "If you do you will have to kill me first!"

She was a brave girl, indeed!

Her courage had undoubtedly saved her lover's life, for had she not delayed the captain, he being forced to pause when she got in his way, Larry would have been cut down in all likelihood before he could have protected himself.

Now, however, it was different.

The delay occasioned by Mary's action gave Larry time to draw a pistol and cock it.

He had no love for the captain, anyway, on account of the insults he had offered Mary, and felt like putting an end to the officer's career.

Leveling the pistol over the girl's shoulder, Larry took quick aim, and fired.

A wild cry of pain escaped the captain's lips, and a scream came from Mary's lips, for she was frightened by it

all, and letting go of the hilt of his sword, the British officer staggered backward and sank down upon a chair.

Blood was showing on the right side of his chest, and it was evident that he was hard hit.

"Oi hated to shoot the fellow roight here in the house, Mary, dear," said Larry, "but it was his loife or moine, an' Oi didn't fale loike givin' up moine jhust yet awhoile."

Mr. and Mrs. Martin had come running into the room just as Larry fired, and they now hastened to the officer's side.

"How do you feel, captain?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Oh, that—Irish—scoundrel—has killed—me!" was the gasping reply.

"Perhaps not so bad as that," said the farmer.

"Shure, an' he naded killin', thot's phwat he did," said Larry. "An' Oi shall not cry much if he turns up his toes, so I shan't."

"Will you help carry him into the room where the other three wounded men are, Larry?" asked Mr. Martin.

"Certainly Oi wull, sur," and then Larry and the farmer lifted the captain, and bore him gently to the room where his three wounded comrades lay.

They placed him on a blanket, and then did all they could for him.

"The surgeon will be here soon, I think," said Mr. Martin. "He was here this forenoon, and said he would be back this evening."

"Shure, an' av he wants to save the loife of this fellow, he had betther be comin' purthy quick," said Larry.

Mr. Martin thought so too, and said as much.

At this moment a knock was heard on the front door, and Mrs. Martin said:

"Likely that's the surgeon now."

"Like as not," agreed her husband. "Well, you go and let him in, wife."

"You had better not be seen here, Larry," said Mary.

"True," said Mr. Martin. "There may be some British soldiers with the surgeon."

"Oi'll be afther makin' meself scarce around here," said Larry, and he went into the kitchen, with Mary, and giving her a kiss, bade her good-by.

"Take good care of yerself, darlint," he said.

"I will, and you must do the same, Larry," was the reply.

"Oi wull; Oi don't fale so afraid-loike fur yez as Oi did, Mary, now that Oi have put the captain on the flat av his back fur a long spell, an' maybe furiver. Oi don't loike the oidee of killin' innywan, but Oi'm not sorry Oi plugged him."

"Neither am I, Larry, though I hope he will not die."

Then Larry passed out of the house, and pulled the door shut behind him.

He walked around the corner, his mind on the girl he was leaving behind him, and as he did so two men leaped upon him and bore him to the ground.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ARRIVAL OF JOE SMOCK.

Larry was taken by surprise, or he would never have permitted himself to be borne to the ground in this manner by only two men.

The "Wild Irishman" had not been so named for nothing.

He was a remarkably strong, athletic fellow, and knew not the meaning of the word fear.

He was surprised by the sudden attack, but he was not frightened by any means.

The only feeling that animated him was anger on account of being leaped upon in this sudden and uncereemonious fashion, and he had not more than struck the ground before he was fighting like a lion.

So fiercely did he struggle, indeed, that his assailants were unable to hold him down; and he kept them so busy they could not draw weapons if they had wished to do so; the result was that Larry was soon up on his knees, and from there he rose to his feet.

A cry of satisfaction escaped his lips at this juncture, and he managed to get each of his assailants by the neck.

"Sure an' it's jhump onto me in the darrk, would yez!" the young Irishman cried grimly. "Wull, Oi'll tach yez betther than to thrate a gintleman in thot fashion, so Oi wull. Take thot!" and he slammed the two men's heads together with such terrible force that they were rendered unconscious, and dropped limp and for the time being lifeless to the ground.

Satisfied with his work, Larry hastened away in the darkness.

He was careful to move as cautiously as possible, for he did not know but there might be more of the redcoats in the vicinity.

"Loikely the two fellows thot jumped onto me came wid the surgeon from Camden," thought Larry.

He hastened up the road, and had gone but little more than a quarter of a mile when he heard the trampling of many feet, and the murmur of voices.

"Shure, an' a lot of thim are after comin', so they are!" the Irish youth said to himself, and he hastened to conceal himself by the roadside.

He lay still in his hiding-place and could make out a dark, moving mass passing along. It was the British force that had been sent up there by Cornwallis to hunt down the "Liberty Boys" and kill or capture them, and Larry learned from the conversation of the soldiers as they passed by that they had tramped all that day without having had any success in learning the whereabouts of their intended prey.

"An' serves yez roight," muttered Larry. "Shure an' Oi hope yez'll niver have inny betther luck than yez have had to-day, begorra!"

When the force had marched past Larry rose and re-

sumed his journey, and an hour later was at the "Liberty Boys'" encampment.

"See anything of the British, Larry?" asked Dick.

"Did Oi? Wull, now, yez can be afther bettin' thot Oi did!"

"Where were they, Larry?" with an interested air.

The Irish youth told him.

"So they have been hunting us all day and could not find us, eh?" remarked Bob. "That is good luck."

"I don't know, Bob," said Dick. "I believe we could thrash the entire force."

"Perhaps we could, with the advantage of position that we have here."

When Larry told how he had shot the captain, and given him a desperate wound, the "Liberty Boys," said he had done a good thing.

"Good for you, Larry," said Bob. "That captain must be a bad one, and you have put a stop to his work for a while, at any rate."

"Yis, Oi don't think he'll be afther doin' innny more damage fur awhoile, if iver," said Larry, and there was undoubted satisfaction in his tone.

There was considerable conversation among the "Liberty Boys," regarding what Larry had told them, and while the others were talking Dick was silent, plunged in thought.

At last Bob noticed that his friend was not taking any part in the conversation, and said:

"What's the matter, Dick? What are you thinking about?"

"I'll tell you, Bob. I have a good mind to go and make an attack on the British to-night."

"That's just the thing."

"Yes, yes."

"That's right."

"Let's do it, Dick!"

Such were a few of the remarks indulged in by the "Liberty Boys."

They were eager to make the attempt, being ready for anything of the kind, as after they had made the attack they could scatter and make their way back to their encampment.

It did not take long to come to a decision, and as might have been expected, it was in favor of making the attack.

The youths at once began looking to their weapons.

They got through with this work, and then settled down to wait. There was no hurry, as Dick thought it best not to make the attack till well along toward midnight.

"They will be asleep by that time," he said, "and even though the sentinels succeed in giving an alarm, we will be able to strike quite a severe blow before the enemy knows what it is all about."

The youths all coincided with this view of the case, and waited patiently for Dick to give the word for the start.

He did not do so till nearly eleven o'clock. This would allow them an hour to walk the distance, and get them to their destination a little before midnight.

Four men only were left at the encampment, to look

after the horses and the prisoner, Joe Smock. The four had been elected by the drawing of lots, for no one wished to be left behind, and Dick did not wish to name the four who were to stay. By drawing lots he avoided this.

The "Liberty Boys" set out, and walked steadily onward for nearly an hour.

Then they paused, for they were close to the farmhouse of the Martin family.

The redcoats must surely be encamped near the house, the "Liberty Boys" judged, but Dick did not wish to take any chances of spoiling their plans by lack of real knowledge, so he told the youths to remain where they were, while he went forward to take a look around.

He stole away as noiselessly as a shadow, and was gone perhaps ten minutes; then he came back and reported that he had discovered all that it was necessary they should know.

"The redcoats are encamped just back of the house," said Dick, "and we will advance straight toward it. The instant the sentry discovers our approach and gives the alarm, we will all make a sudden dash forward, fire two, three, or four volleys, as circumstances permit, and then retreat as quickly as possible, scattering, so as to make it impossible for the enemy to do much damage if they fire upon us as we leave."

The youths signified that they understood the instructions, and then waited for the order to advance.

Dick soon gave it, and then they stole forward. Although there were one hundred of them, they made so little noise that it would have been hard to hear them even at a distance of only a few yards.

Closer and closer to the farmhouse they drew, and they were within ten yards of the sentinel before he discovered their presence.

He gave utterance to a yell, and started to lift his musket, to fire, but he was forestalled, two or three of the youths firing at the same instant, and down went the sentinel upon his face, shot through the heart.

Then forward dashed the "Liberty Boys," yelling and firing rapidly.

They made as much din as possible, in order to confuse the redcoats, who would be drowsy, and unable to comprehend the meaning of it all immediately.

The British were leaping up, and seizing their muskets, however, and soon they would be in a position to return the fire of the youths.

Many of their number were already dead or wounded, and the "Liberty Boys" kept on firing, and Dick gave the order to retire.

Instantly the youths darted away, scattering, each one looking out for himself.

The redcoats, seeing that the enemy had fled, followed, yelling and firing.

They did no damage to speak of, however. The youths were out of sight, and were scattered far and wide, and the random shots could not be expected to hit the mark.

To say that the redcoats were angry is not expressing

their feelings at all. They were wild with rage, and ran hither and thither, in a wild effort to find some of the enemy, and shoot them.

Of course, they were unsuccessful, and at last, tired, disgusted, and disappointed, they made their way back to the encampment, and began looking to the comfort of their wounded.

It was found that there were twelve men seriously wounded, while as many more had received slight wounds. Twenty-three had been killed outright; and these were buried as soon as it was light enough to see in the morning.

Then the officers held a council. They were eager to strike the "Liberty Boys" a blow in return for the blow that had been struck them, and it was decided to send out scouts and spies, in all directions, and discover the hiding-place of the enemy.

"It will do no good for us to take the entire force and go trailing around the country," said one of the officers. "The thing to do is to let the force remain here, taking it easy, until the whereabouts of the 'Liberty Boys' is discovered, and then we can go after them, and either kill or capture the entire force."

"That is my idea," said another, and so it was decided to follow out this plan.

They selected a dozen of the best men they had for that sort of work, and told them what was to be done.

"The hiding-place of the 'Liberty Boys' must be discovered," said the spokesman of the three officers. "Go, now, and look everywhere, carefully and searchingly. The enemy must be within a few miles of here, and you must find their hiding-place."

The men said they would do their best, and set out.

They were gone all day, and came straggling in, one after the other, in the evening; and one and all reported the same thing—failure.

They had been unable to find the hiding-place of the "Liberty Boys."

"That is too bad," said the leading officer. "Well, we will try again, to-morrow; and perhaps we will have better success."

That night they placed out three lines of sentinels, the farthest out being distant at least a third of a mile from the encampment.

"The 'Liberty Boys' will not surprise us again," the officer said, grimly. "They cannot hope to get through three lines of sentinels, and find us unprepared to greet them."

And such proved to be the case. If the "Liberty Boys" were anywhere in the vicinity they saw the uselessness of trying to make an attack; at any rate, no attack was made.

Next morning, while the soldiers were eating their breakfast, a gawky youth, bareheaded and wildly excited, burst into the encampment, the sentinel having refrained from shooting him, because of the fact that he thought he might be the bearer of important news.

He was right, for the boy in question was Joe Smock.

"I know whur ther 'Liberty Boys' air hid!" Joe cried. "I've be'n er pris'n'er in theer han's, but I got erway, an' ef ye want me ter, I'll show ye ther way ter whur they air!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEED OF A BRAVE GIRL.

Of course the redcoats were only too glad to hear what Joe had to say.

The three officers took the youth in hand, and plied him with questions.

He told them how the party of "Liberty Boys" had come to his home and taken a lot of provisions, and that he had followed, with the intention of learning where they were staying and coming and informing the British, but had been captured and taken to the "Liberty Boys' " encampment and held there, a prisoner.

"But this mornin' I managed ter git free frum ther rope whut they hed me tied with," said Joe, "and I slipped out uv ther camp, an' got erway."

"And you came straight here, did you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you suppose the 'Liberty Boys' have discovered your escape by this time?"

"I dunno, sir, but I think et is more'n likely."

"Then they will take the alarm, and flee," said the officer, excitedly. "We must hasten, and try to get there before they get away."

"I don't think ye need ter be afraid uv thet, mister," said Joe.

"Why not?"

"Waal, ye see, et's this way. I know thet they hev be'n foragin' about, an' hev got er lot uv pervisions on han's, an' I heerd 'em torkin' erbout ez how they c'u'd hold orf enny force a'most thet c'u'd be brought erg'in' 'em, and I don't think they will try ter git erway."

"They must have some strong reason for wishing to remain in this vicinity, then," said one of the officers.

"You are right, for they could easily escape, as they have horses, while we are on foot."

"I on'y know, mister, thet they seem ter be intendin' ter stay whur they air fur quite erwhile," said Joe.

"We will get ready and march to their hiding-place as soon as possible, anyway," said the leading officer.

As soon as breakfast was finished the order was given for the soldiers to get ready to march, and they at once began making their preparations for breaking camp.

If the British expected to reach the point where the "Liberty Boys" were encamped, and treat the youths to a surprise, however, they were destined to be disappointed.

Mary Martin had witnessed the coming of Joe Smock, and had managed to hear what he said to the officers.

She thought of Larry, and made up her mind that she would warn the "Liberty Boys" of their danger.

True, she realized that in all probability the youths would discover the escape of the prisoner and suspect that he would act as guide to the redcoats; but there was a possibility that they might not discover it, and then they might be taken by surprise by the British.

That would never do at all, and she made up her mind to warn the youths. Larry had told her where the encampment was, and as she had been there more than once in the past years, to fish, in company with other young folks of the neighborhood, she knew she would have no difficulty in finding the spot.

She did not say a word to her parents, as she feared the officers might notice her absence and ask where she was, and if her parents did not know they would only say so, and that would end it; if they were to know where she had gone they would be worried.

So she slipped out, and away, and was soon past the sentinels, whose attention was directed in some other direction, and she walked as rapidly as possible.

She was scarcely more than an hour in reaching the encampment, and when she was challenged by the astonished sentry, she told who she was, and he let her pass on into the encampment.

"Jove, that's Larry's girl!" said the youth to himself. "Well, she's pretty, and there is no mistake about that. Larry is in luck to have such a sweetheart."

Mary Martin was panting, but eager and excited when she entered the camp, and the youths stared at her in amazement.

Larry uttered a whoop, rushed forward, and greeted his sweetheart joyously.

"Sure, an' here she is, byes!" he cried, leading the blushing girl forward. "Here's me swateheart, an' she's jhust the swatest swateheart thot inny fellow iver had, begorra!"

"Oh, hush, Larry," the girl exclaimed. "These young men can't see me with your eyes, and so they won't agree with you on that point."

"Shure, an' av they dare to say as how yez are not the swatest gurrel in Amiriky, then they'll have to foight me, begorra!" the Irish youth cried, with a comical grimace.

"Oh, we think the same that you do, Larry," said Bob. "We are willing to agree with you, that she is just one of the sweetest girls in these parts."

"Don't be afther gitthin' too enthusiastic, Bob, me bye," warned Larry. "An' yez do, yez may have to foight me, innyhow, fur it's jillous-hearted Oi am."

This occasioned a laugh, and caused Mary to blush more than ever, but she hid her confusion as best she could, and said to Dick:

"I have come to warn you, Mr. Slater."

"Of what, Miss Mary?"

"That you are to be attacked here, soon."

"By the British, eh?"

"Yes."

"How do they know where we are?"

"Joe Smock told them."

"Ah! So he went straight there on making his escape, did he?"

"Yes, sir. You knew he had escaped, then?"

"Yes. We discovered it shortly after he got away, I am sure, and we made search for him, but could not find him. We supposed that in all likelihood he had gone home, however. We thought he would be afraid to go and report our whereabouts to the British."

"No; he appeared at my home, panting and excited, and told the British that he had been a prisoner in your hands, and that if they wished, he would guide them to where you were."

"And they are coming soon, eh?"

"Yes, sir; just as soon as they can get here."

"You are a brave girl, to come and warn us, Miss Mary," said Dick earnestly, "and in the name of the 'Liberty Boys' I thank you."

"Oh, you are welcome, sir. I was glad to do it, for I am a patriot, and——"

"Her swateheart is wan of the 'Liberty Byes'!" finished Larry, with a huge grin.

"Will you keep still, Larry?" exclaimed the girl, playfully slapping him.

"Shure, an' Oi'll be dumb as an aysther av yez say fur me to, Miss Mary," he said. "Phwativer yez tell me to do, thot Oi'll do, so Oi wull."

"Well, I must be going back," said Mary. "I don't wish the redcoats to come and hem us in before I can get away. And you, sir, are you not going to hasten to get away?"

"No, we will remain right here, Miss Mary."

"But they will hem you in, and will force you to surrender."

"I don't think they will be able to do so. We have plenty of provisions, oceans of water, and can stand off a small army."

"Well, I hope you will be able to do so, sir. And now, good-by all."

"Good-by," replied Dick, lifting his hat, and bowing gracefully.

The other "Liberty Boys" followed his example, and Bob said:

"Three cheers for Mary Martin, the brave patriot girl!"

The cheers were given with a will, and then, flushing with pleasure, the girl took her departure, Larry, at Dick's suggestion, accompanying her a ways.

Presently Mary stopped, and told Larry he had better go back.

"I am afraid we might meet the British, and you would be killed or captured, Larry," she said. "Please go back."

"An' how will yez kape frum bein' seen by the spalpanes, darlint?" asked Larry.

"I am going to make a wide detour, Larry, and thus get around them."

"Thot's a good oidee, begorra, an' Oi'm glad thot yez thought of it."

Then he gave the girl a hug and a dozen kisses, and the

two parted, the girl to make her way to her home, Larry to return to the "Liberty Boys' " encampment.

Larry had not gone far before he caught sight of some bright, scarlet-clad figures over toward the right, and he knew at once that the enemy was coming.

He broke into a run at once.

"Begorra, an' the spalpanes are roight on hand, so they are!" he said to himself. "Oi must bate thim back, or it's mesilf wull be lift all alone out in the timber."

He ran with all his might, and had the satisfaction of seeing that he was leaving the redcoats behind.

They had evidently gotten a glimpse of Larry, for they were running, and gesticulating to one another, but the "Wild Irishman" was fleet of foot, and distanced them.

A few minutes later he burst into the "Liberty Boys' " encampment, and cried out, excitedly:

"To arrums, byes. The spalpanes are comin'! They're roight clost at hand, so they are!"

The youths seized their weapons and dashed to the point where the neck of land joined the mainland, and made ready to receive the redcoats properly.

They had not long to wait.

Perhaps three minutes elapsed, and then the redcoats put in an appearance.

They halted just out of musketshot distance, however, and a man was seen approaching, bearing a white flag.

"They want to talk to you, Dick," said Bob.

"So they do. I'll just see what they have to say."

And Dick walked forth to meet the messenger.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TERRIBLE COMBAT.

"Are you Dick Slater, commander of the 'Liberty Boys'?" asked the messenger, when he and Dick were face to face, about midway between the two parties.

"I am," was the reply. "What can I do for you?"

"I have a message for you from our commander, Captain Moore."

"What is the message?"

"He asks on what terms you will surrender?"

"Go back and tell Captain Moore, with my respects, that we will not surrender on any terms."

"What, you refuse?" in surprise, whether assumed or not, Dick could not tell.

"Certainly I do."

"Why, you have only one hundred men."

"I know that."

"While we have nearly four times that number."

If the messenger expected to overawe Dick with this statement he made a mistake, for the "Liberty Boy" merely laughed, and remarked:

"That is nothing. We always want to have at least four times our number to contend with. That is the only

way we can have things made interesting for us. I'm glad you've told us your strength."

The messenger stared. He had heard of Dick Slater many times, and had heard that he was a cool, daring, and fearless fellow, but he had not expected to see him so cool and unconcerned in the face of overwhelming—as it seemed to the redcoat—odds.

"So you think it takes at least four times your own number to make it interesting for you, do you?" he remarked slowly.

"Yes; and under the present circumstances, where we have the advantage of position, it would take seven or eight times our own number to dislodge us."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"And again you refuse to surrender?"

"I do."

"Then the only thing for me to do is to go back and tell Captain Moore what you have said."

"That is the only thing for you to do."

"Very well. I will do so."

The messenger bowed and turned away and Dick did the same.

"What did he want, Dick?" asked Bob, when the youth was back among his comrades.

"He wanted us to surrender."

"Well, I suppose you told him that we are not the surrendering kind?"

"That is what I told him."

"Good! I wonder if they will make an attack?"

"I don't know."

"I hope they will. We can thrash that crowd."

Meanwhile the messenger was reporting to his captain.

"Dick Slater says he refuses to surrender, sir," the messenger said.

"Ha! He refuses, does he?" the captain cried.

"Yes, sir."

"Did you tell him how greatly we outnumber his force?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he say?"

"That he was glad of it. That it took about four times their number to make it interesting for them."

"The insolent scoundrel!"

"He seemed cool and confident."

"Oh, he has plenty of confidence. But we'll take it out of him before much longer."

"He says that with the advantage they have in position they could thrash seven or eight times their number, sir."

This made the captain angrier than ever.

"Well, we'll just go in and show him his mistake. We will make an attack, and kill or capture them before the day is an hour older."

Then he began giving orders, and getting ready to make the attack.

The "Liberty Boys" saw considerable stir among the ranks of the enemy, and Dick at once suspected that an attack was to be made.

"They are going to attack us, boys," he said. "We will have to fight like demons, for they outnumber us nearly four to one."

"We'll thrash them, Dick!" said Bob.

"Shure, an' we'll do thot same!" declared Larry Holt. The others nodded their heads, and set their teeth in grim determination.

Soon the redcoats were seen advancing.

They came in solid ranks till they were almost within musket-shot distance, and then they suddenly broke ranks and came rushing pell-mell toward the "Liberty Boys," yelling and firing their muskets.

If they thought to disconcert the "Liberty Boys" by such tactics, however, they were badly fooled; the youths had been in too many battles to be disconcerted by yells and wild firing.

They rested quietly on one knee, their muskets leveled, their left elbows on their left knees, taking aim as the enemy approached. They were simply awaiting the signal from Dick for them to fire.

It was not long withheld. Dick wished to get in the musket volley and two or three pistol volleys before they came to close quarters, and so he gave the signal, a shrill, piercing whistle.

The "Liberty Boys" fired instantly.

The volley did wonderful execution, when it is considered that the British were scattered and moving as rapidly as they could. Many of them were moving in erratic fashion, too, jumping first one way, then the other, on purpose to disconcert the youths' aim.

The "Liberty Boys" were splendid shots, however, and had practiced till they could hit almost anything, and their shots did great damage.

At least fifty of the redcoats went down, dead or wounded.

Then the pistols were drawn and two volleys were fired in quick succession.

Of course the pistols did not do so much damage as the muskets had caused, but at least thirty of the enemy went down as a result of the two volleys.

With wonderful quickness the youths returned the empty weapons to their belts, and drew two more loaded pistols.

These were fired in quick succession, and as the enemy was now close at hand, fully as much damage was done as by the other two pistol volleys when the enemy was farther away.

The redcoats were desperate and determined, however.

They had lost more than one hundred of their men, but they still had at least two hundred and fifty, which made

them much stronger for a hand-to-hand combat than their opponents, and the captain, who was a shrewd fellow, and quite brave, kept encouraging his men to keep on till they were at close quarters.

"Close in upon them," he yelled in the lull between the volleys. "Close in upon them, and we can crush them easily. Forward, men!"

He kept encouraging his troops in this manner, and they kept on advancing, in spite of the terrible havoc that had been made.

Seeing it was bound to come to a hand-to-hand affair, Dick decided to take the bull by the horns, as the saying goes, and he ordered the youths to give the redcoats a bayonet-charge.

"Charge!" he cried. "Show them how the 'Liberty Boys' can fight!"

The youths obeyed instantly, and dashed forward to meet the redcoats with alacrity. They gave utterance to wild cheers as they went, and finished up with their battle-cry of:

"Down with the king! Long live liberty!"

With these words they were upon the redcoats, bayonetting right and left, and then they clubbed their weapons, and laid about them lustily.

It was a terrible combat.

The "Liberty Boys" were outnumbered more than two to one, but they fought with such desperation that it seemed almost an even thing for awhile.

Then the force of numbers began to tell, and the youths were forced slowly but surely backward.

They contested every inch of the ground, and fought with such fury and desperation as to almost appall the British; but the redcoats set their teeth and fought doggedly and desperately, also, and there is no doubt but they would have overcome the "Liberty Boys" ultimately had not an interruption come.

The interruption was as sudden as unexpected.

Without warning a party of perhaps seventy-five or eighty horsemen dashed out of the timber and attacked the redcoats from the rear.

Thus taken by surprise, and attacked from both directions—being between two fires, as it were—the redcoats became demoralized, and broke and fled for their lives.

It was an utter rout.

It was a case of every man for himself, and many of the fleeing soldiers were cut down by the horsemen.

The "Liberty Boys" pursued, also, and cut down a number of the enemy, and what had only a few moments before

looked like a defeat for the youths, was turned into a glorious victory.

Perhaps one hundred of the redcoats escaped. At least two hundred and fifty of their force lay dead, dying, or wounded on the field.

It had indeed been a terrible combat.

Of the "Liberty Boys," eight had been killed, and seventeen were wounded, but fortunately none of the wounds were serious.

The loss of the eight brave "Liberty Boys" saddened the rest, but they made the best of it, looking upon it as the fortune of war, and to be expected.

As soon as the redcoats were gone, and the pursuit had been abandoned, the leader of the strange horsemen approached, and leaping to the ground, seized Dick's hand and shook it warmly.

"Dick, my boy, I am glad to see you," he said; "and I am delighted that I and my comrades got here at such an opportune moment, and were able to render you the aid you needed."

"And so am I glad of it, General Marion," said Dick, shaking the man's hand.

It was indeed General Marion, the famous "Swamp Fox," and he and his men had got there at an opportune moment, sure enough.

Dick and his "Liberty Boys" and Marion and his men had met before, and, indeed, had fought side by side against the British on two previous occasions, and the greetings between the youths and the veterans was cordial and joyous.

Captain Moore and his remnant of the force that had attacked the "Liberty Boys" hastened back to Camden, and Cornwallis, when he learned what had taken place, sent a force of a thousand men to where the encounter had taken place. He intended to exterminate the company of "Lib-

erty Boys," if they were found there, but they were not there. They had disappeared, and all that was there were the dead, dying, and wounded redcoats.

The British soldiers buried their dead, and carried the wounded to the Martin home. Later on they hauled all the wounded to Camden, where they could have the surgeon's constant attention, and as may be supposed the members of the Martin family were delighted.

Captain Horton, who was wounded at the Martin home by Larry, as will be remembered, died soon after being taken to Camden.

Joe Smock, who was with the British force at the encounter with the "Liberty Boys," received a stray bullet in his shoulder, and while he managed to get to his home, it was all he could do, and it was two months before he could get out of doors again; and when he was able to get out he said he was done with war, and that the British would have to get along without any more help from him.

On the night after the redcoats took the wounded men away from the Martin home, Larry Holt called there, and had a long and highly satisfactory talk with Mary. She told him he might come for her as soon as the war was over, and he declared that he would be on hand to claim his bride.

Larry, the "Wild Irishman," had fought like a wild Irishman, indeed, in the battle with the redcoats, and although he had been wounded in the arm early in the combat, he had kept on fighting. He had his arm in a sling when he went to see Mary, and bid her good-by, but he had one good arm—the right one, in a double sense—and he was enabled to hug the blushing girl all right.

Thus we leave the "Wild Irishman."

The "Liberty Boys" were told by Marion that there was work to do over in the eastern part of the State, and so they went with his party to see about it. As may be supposed, they were not long in finding plenty to do.

THE END.

The next number (108) of "The Liberty Boys of '76" will contain "THE LIBERTY BOYS' SURPRISE; OR, NOT JUST WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR," by Harry Moore.

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